abilityneeds

THE ESSENTIAL JOURNAL ON DISABILITY

SUMMER Q3 2025
QUARTERLY
£3.00

New Columnist Isaac Harvey MBE

Time for a Summer escape?

ISSN 1477-1225

Motoring & Mobility

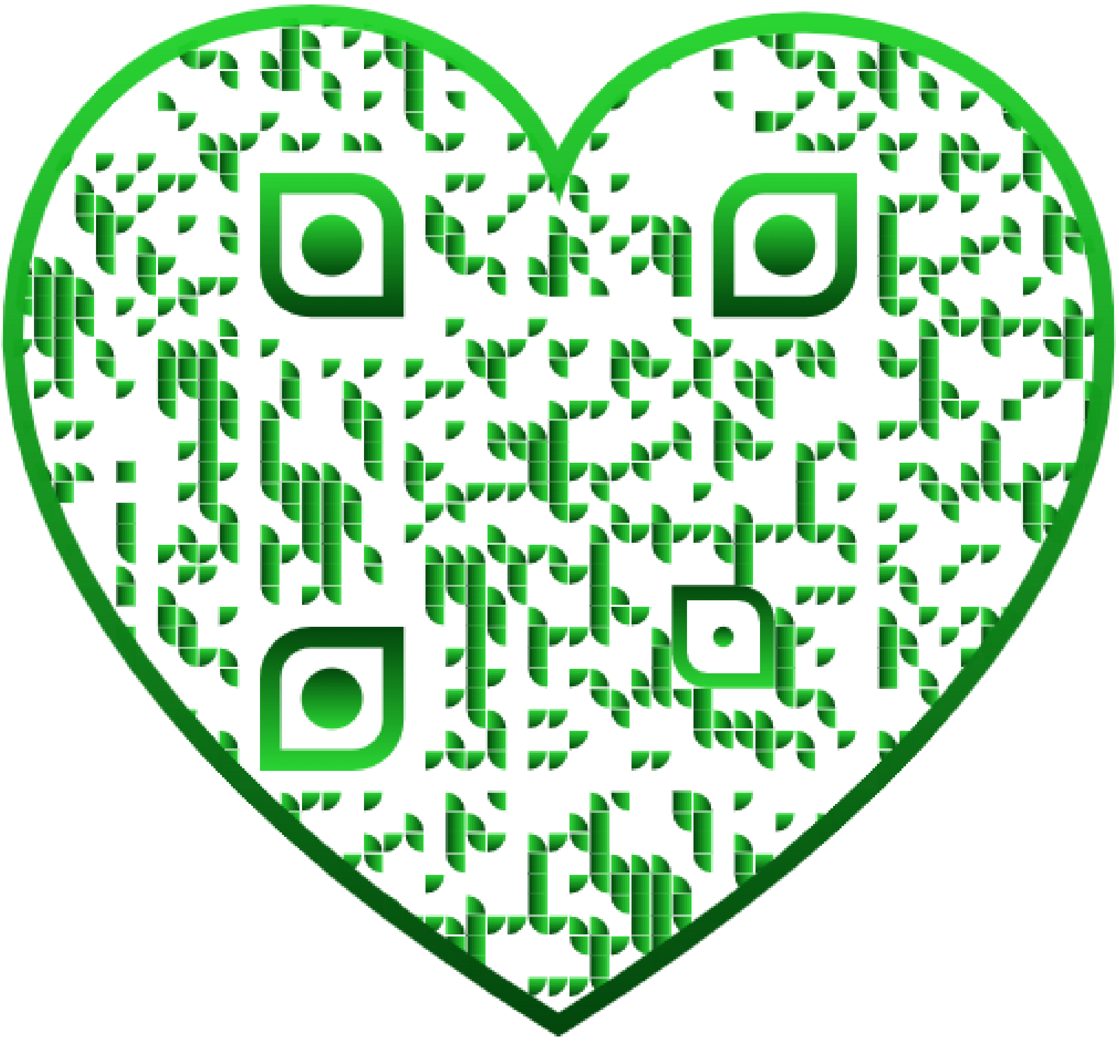
Finding the right products for you

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE

Tanni speaks about two of the Bills currently going through Parliament

Adaptive Surfing

Making surfing accessible for everyone



Monarch Mobility

Introducing the new Supa Carbon-Lite

Only 13Kg in weight

We are proud to announce the launch of our new 13Kg carbon fibre, manually folding mobility scooter. It's capable of carrying up to 18 stone, features USB and magnetic charging, offboard charging, a digital display, rear suspension, NFC technology and is fully airline friendly.

SUPA CARBON-LITE

☎ 0800 002 9633 ✉ trade@monarchmobility.com 🌐 monarchmobility.com

You love cool products,

well guess what, so do we!

The hoss R1
2 wheel drive

Zoom uphill
4 wheel drive

The Zoom Uphill does what it says on the label, it takes you uphill and then downhill and uphill again...
Take a look at user stories at www.addmobility.com
With permanent four wheel drive the Zoom uphill can take you on a fun journey and back again.

The totally integrated hoss R1 - taking joystick controlled gyros to another level.
Advanced patented safety features built-in including seatbelt
Joystick controls forward and sidways movement
Max Range of 60 kms
Off-road capability
Fits through standard doors.
Left or right handed - can be changed by the user.
With removeable arms and folded seat can fit in most cars.

Would you like to convert your Segway to a seated solution then we have the solution.
Missing the Segway don't worry our partner can supply a refurbished unit.

The AddSeat Adapto fitted to a Segway®

Enjoy the two wheeled freedom of a seated Segway. We can fit the basic AddSeat Adapto to your Segway from £4500 plus VAT (VAT relief may be available)

For more information contact sales@addmobility.com or 02476 980 980

Meet us and try AddSeat, Hoss R1, Zoom in the Land & Estates section

THE GAME FAIR 25-27 JULY 2025 RAGLEY HALL

Meet us and try Hoss R1 and Zoom in the Innovation area of

Motability Scheme Live

Note Hoss R1 and Zoom Uphill are not offered on the Motability scheme

www.addmobility.com

Addaptx Ltd T/A AddMobility
Centenary Business Centre,
Hammond Close, Nuneaton,
Warwickshire, CV11 6RY

AddMobility
Official partner in the UK
hoss MOBILITY

Adapto/AddSeat by Addmovement

AddMobility
Official distributor in the UK
[zoom]ability

Prices shown valid until
31st October 2025

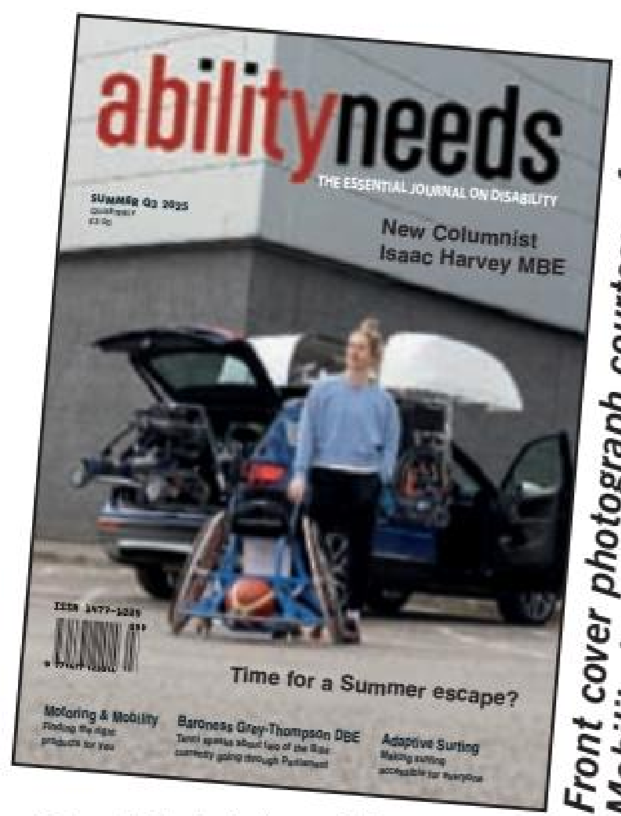
Segway® is the registered trademark of Segway Inc.

abilityneeds
THE ESSENTIAL JOURNAL ON DISABILITY

7 Montgomerie Terrace, Ayr, KA7 1JL
Tel 01292 287574
email:
info@abilityneeds.co.uk
web:
www.abilityneeds.co.uk

All Rights Reserved
No part of this publication may be reproduced or used in any way without written permission of the publisher. The views expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher and although every effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate, the publishers take no responsibility for errors and omissions. No responsibility can be accepted by the publishers for any claims made by the advertisers in this publication.

Contents



Front cover photograph courtesy of Mobility in Motion

1 **Motoring and Mobility**
- Featuring the latest vehicles and products available in the mobility marketplace

18 **Isaac Harvey MBE**
- Realising My Value: My Unexpected Lesson in Self-Worth – Isaac, our new columnist, shares his journey to discovering and understanding his own worth

22 **Tanni's View**
- Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE – Tanni speaks about the Welfare Reform Bill and the Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill, how they are tied together and their journey through the Commons and the Lords

30 **Eddie Peacock**
- What has happened to common sense? – Eddie points out that whilst attention to detail in the NHS may be important, ensuring the maximum resources available are used on treatment is essential

36 **Industry Insight**
- Cheapest is not always best value for money – Angus discusses the importance of ensuring "lifetime" value for money when purchasing mobility equipment

46 **Cheryl Everitt**
- Vilnius: The city break worth making time for – Cheryl tells us about her visit to the 'Unexpectedly amazing' Lithuanian city

Purchase a digital copy of Ability Needs at www.magzter.com

CLOUD CUDDLE
FOR YOUR SAFEST DREAMS

The Cloud Cuddle is a multi award winning - CE Marked - class 1 medical device. It's tough, robust and durable and in just 5 minutes it can be fitted to any single bed to create a safe and calming place for a child to sleep and relax.

Huge cost saving compared to care cots & soft surround bed options.

Home assessments throughout the UK are available.

AWARD WINNING
THE BEST CHOICE

- Recommend by Healthcare Professionals
- At Home (long term solution)
- At Respite (when required)
- Fits to all domestic beds
- Fits to all Hi/Lo Care beds
- On a mattress on the floor
- Lightweight – take anywhere
- Machine washable
- Fits to 200x90cm single bed
- Fits to 190x90cm single bed
- Fits to 180x90cm single bed

Ideal Long Term Sleeping Solution

SpaceSaverBeds

Tel: 01905 347538 info@spacesaverbeds.co.uk
www.spacesaverbeds.co.uk

Robotic Integrated Rehabilitation

Founded in 2021, Thor Assistive Technologies Ltd leverages more than 25 years of expertise in mobility, assistive technology, robotics, and exoskeleton devices to advance neuro-rehabilitation. Recognising the profound benefits that assistive devices bring to rehabilitation, the company has focused on evidence-based solutions that increase exercise repetitions and dosage, both crucial to improving patient outcomes. Their innovative devices not only facilitate higher repetition rates compared to traditional methods but also capture detailed data for clinicians, enabling precise comparisons between initial presentations and outcome measures.

This emphasis on repetition is fundamental to impacting neuroplasticity—the brain's remarkable ability to reorganise and adapt following injury. By enabling patients to perform more repetitions with precision and consistency, these robotic-assisted interventions facilitate relearning and the formation of new neural pathways, dramatically enhancing the potential for functional recovery. As a result, individuals are empowered not only to regain lost abilities but also to achieve meaningful, long-term improvements in their rehabilitation journey.

Through the integration of advanced robotics, intuitive software, and interactive gaming elements, Thor Assistive Technologies ensures high levels of patient engagement and sustained motivation. This approach allows for truly personalised rehabilitation journeys, dynamically adapting to individual progress and providing real-time feedback. The company has established RehabHubs across the UK, collaborating with partner clinics to conduct trials, case studies, and ongoing evaluations, consistently demonstrating the advantages of combining technology with traditional therapy.

Thor Assistive Technologies continually seeks out the latest advancements in rehabilitation robotics globally. Their portfolio reflects a curated selection of cutting-edge devices sourced from leading manufacturers, ensuring clinicians and patients benefit from proven and emerging technologies alike. By offering a flexible range of procurement options—including purchasing, renting, and leasing, allows clinics to have a single point of contact for multiple devices and manufacturers.

Based in the Midlands, Thor Assistive Technologies offers comprehensive services including supply, installation, training, upgrades, and ongoing support to clinics throughout the UK and Ireland. By building strong relationships and supporting their clinical partners, Thor is dedicated to making cutting-edge rehabilitation technology accessible to a wider community.

Stephen Ruffle
Commercial Director

www.thortechnologies.co.uk

stephen@thorsafety.co.uk
Tel: 07469 254453

Robotic Integrated Rehabilitation

EGZOTech
Luna EMG
Robotic EMG-assistive device for upper and lower limb neurorehabilitation
Stella BIO
8-channel electrostimulation and electromyography biofeedback device
EGZOTech
EXOATLET
QuicklyPro
AERO-RUNNER PRO
kinestica
equio
bimeo
DPE Medical ltd.
Innovation In Rehabilitation
CTN.FI
RECOVERY TECHNOLOGIES

‘Treated with contempt’: National call for urgent action on stigma and safety of mobility scooter users

Mobility scooter insurance intermediary, Surewise, has joined forces with charities, mobility retailers and academics to urge the Government to act on rising casualties, inadequate infrastructure and the growing tide of hostility and verbal abuse faced by many users.

Despite being legally used by people with disabilities and mobility issues, mobility scooters are often seen as a nuisance or even a menace - not the lifelines they truly are.

“People shout at me in the street - telling me I shouldn’t be using a scooter, that there’s nothing wrong with me, or that I’m just lazy,” said Dean Brook (56), from Nuneaton in Warwickshire.

Mr Brook began using a mobility scooter after losing both legs below the knee due to complications from type 2 diabetes and neuropathy. Prior to that Dean was fit and healthy, worked full time and enjoyed playing football. He added “I’ve lost count of how many times I’ve had to lift my trouser leg to prove to complete strangers that I have prosthetic limbs. It’s humiliating.”

Surewise launched the Safer Mobility Campaign in April 2024 after uncovering a troubling 20 per cent year-on-year rise in serious injuries and deaths involving mobility scooter users over the past decade. In 2023 alone, 16 mobility scooter users were killed in collisions - nearly double the nine fatalities recorded in 2022. But since launching the campaign, it has become increasingly clear that stigma, social hostility and everyday obstructions pose an equally serious threat to mobility scooter users’ wellbeing and independence as the physical dangers on the roads.

Richard Hannan, Director of Surewise, said: “These are already vulnerable people, many of whom face serious medical conditions - and yet they’re insulted, ignored, mocked and blocked, simply for trying to live independently. This inequality in perception and treatment can no longer be ignored. We need formal recognition, national guidance and visible support to change how mobility scooter users are seen – and to make our streets safer and more inclusive for everyone.”

The call is backed by organisations across the disability, research and retail sectors - including Wheels for Wellbeing, Nottingham Trent University, Warwickshire Road Safety Partnership and Mobility and Lifestyle.

Kate Ball, Campaigns and Policy Lead at Wheels for Wellbeing, a Disabled People’s Organisation working to improve access to walking/wheeling, cycling and multi-modal journey making for all Disabled people, said: “Powered, e-assisted and unpowered mobility aids including mobility scooters, wheelchairs, wheelchair power add-ons, cycles and micromobility devices are critical for enabling Disabled people to get to work, to education, to run errands, care for ourselves and our families, and to take part fully in society.

“We need attitudes and the law to change so all Disabled people can safely use the mobility aids that work for us to make the journeys we need to.”

Legally, mobility scooters can be used on the pavement, and Class 3 scooters are permitted on the road - although many road users are unaware of these rules. Mobility scooters are not legally allowed in cycle lanes, yet this too is often misunderstood.

Campaigners say this confusion fuels public hostility, with users frequently shouted at to “get off the road” or “off the pavement” - sometimes during the same journey.

The Safer Mobility campaign is urging the Department for Transport to update the Highway Code to explicitly include mobility scooter users in the “Hierarchy of Road Users” - a framework introduced in 2022 that prioritises the safety of the most vulnerable.

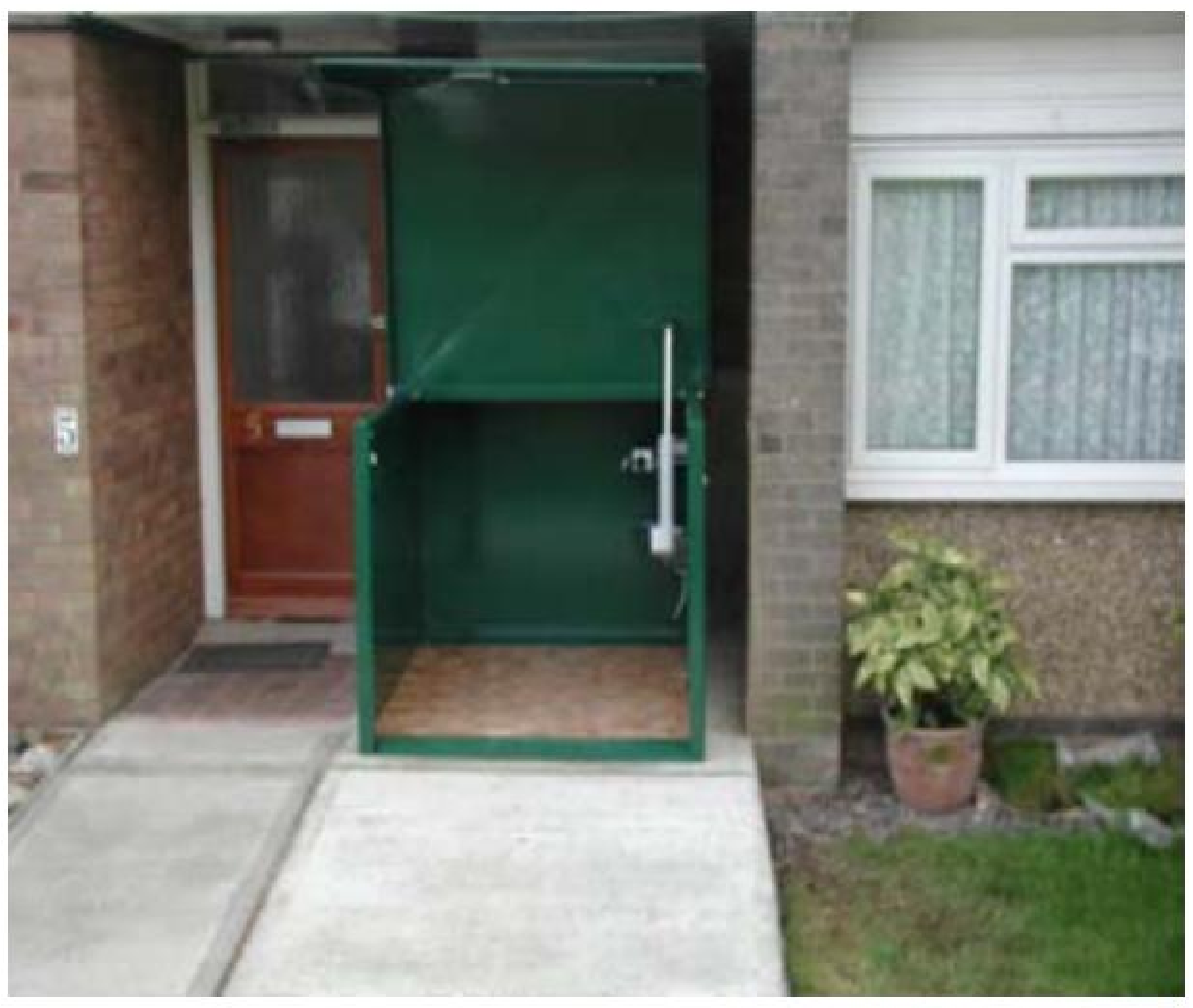
Despite their vulnerability, mobility scooter users remain absent from this guidance, putting lives at risk and reinforcing negative perceptions. They are calling for better public education on the rules and rights, so that mobility scooter users can travel safely without fear or confrontation.

For more information visit www. surewise.com

drivedevilbiss.co.uk

Enhancing Lives Together

drive | DeVilbiss HEALTHCARE



WELCOME TO SCOOTER STORE LIMITED

Scooter Store Limited is an established company with over twenty-five years' experience, which has become very popular especially with the elderly and disabled community nationwide.

- The concept is a small, secure store designed specifically for mobility vehicles, to be operated with minimal effort. This provides the user with more independence and effective storage for their scooter at home.
- The Scooter Store was designed in response to a demand from the public as many mobility scooter users have struggled to store their scooters in living rooms, communal hallways etc, causing fire hazards and limiting their space. The Scooter Store is a fireproof, theft proof, compact alternative that will enable the user to securely store their scooter.
- Our product has been extremely popular with the elderly and disabled community for over twenty-five years. We've worked with a multitude of local Housing Trusts/Associations, charitable organisations, County, City and Borough Councils to install Scooter Stores across the UK.
- All Scooter Stores are manufactured from 2mm steel with a powder coated finish, push button controlled, fully lockable and include a socket for charging the scooter is provided inside the store.
- Standard, Double and Bespoke sizes are available. The stores are delivered flat packed to allow installation to awkward sites. Stores can be relocated if required.
- We also offer free site surveys to give advice on store locations, hard standing areas etc, if required.

Our Contact Details: Scooter Store Limited, Unit 11 Riverside Business Park, Cambridge Road, Harlow, CM20 2HE
Tel: 01279 453565 www.scooterstoreltd.com info@scooterstoreltd.co.uk

---

Edinburgh's iconic floral clock celebrates 200 years of braille

Edinburgh's iconic floral clock- the oldest in the world- is marking 200 years of braille, the tactile code that enables blind and partially sighted people to read by touch.

More than 35,000 flowers and plants are used in the clock, which will be in bloom until October. This includes plants like antennaria, crassula, echevaria, sedum and saxifrage and annuals such as pyrethrum, begonias and geraniums.

This year, the RNIB is marking the 200th anniversary of the invention of braille, a code based on six dots used to represent the alphabet and numbers.

James Adams, Director of RNIB Scotland, said: "It is a great honour that RNIB has been chosen for this year's floral clock. It marks the 200th anniversary of the invention of braille which opened up opportunity for blind and partially sighted people to be able to access the written word, and with that came the liberation of being able to also receive information that is taken for granted by wider society.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF BLIND PEOPLE
RNIB

"Braille is a system that endures, and continues to transform the lives of blind and partially sighted people, offering them privacy, independence, and opportunity. RNIB was brought into existence to improve tactile literacy and we still work every day to widen access for blind and partially sighted people. Therefore, we are delighted to have Braille200 so prominently marked in the heart of Edinburgh and give everyone the opportunity to celebrate braille and include accessibility in their lives."

The Floral Clock was first created in 1903 by then Edinburgh Parks Superintendent, John McHattie, and is the oldest of its kind in the world. It initially operated with just an hour hand, with a minute hand added in 1904, followed by a cuckoo clock in 1952. Until 1972 the clock was operated mechanically and had to be wound daily. Since 1946 it has been designed in honour of various organisations and individuals.

For more information visit www.rnid.org.uk

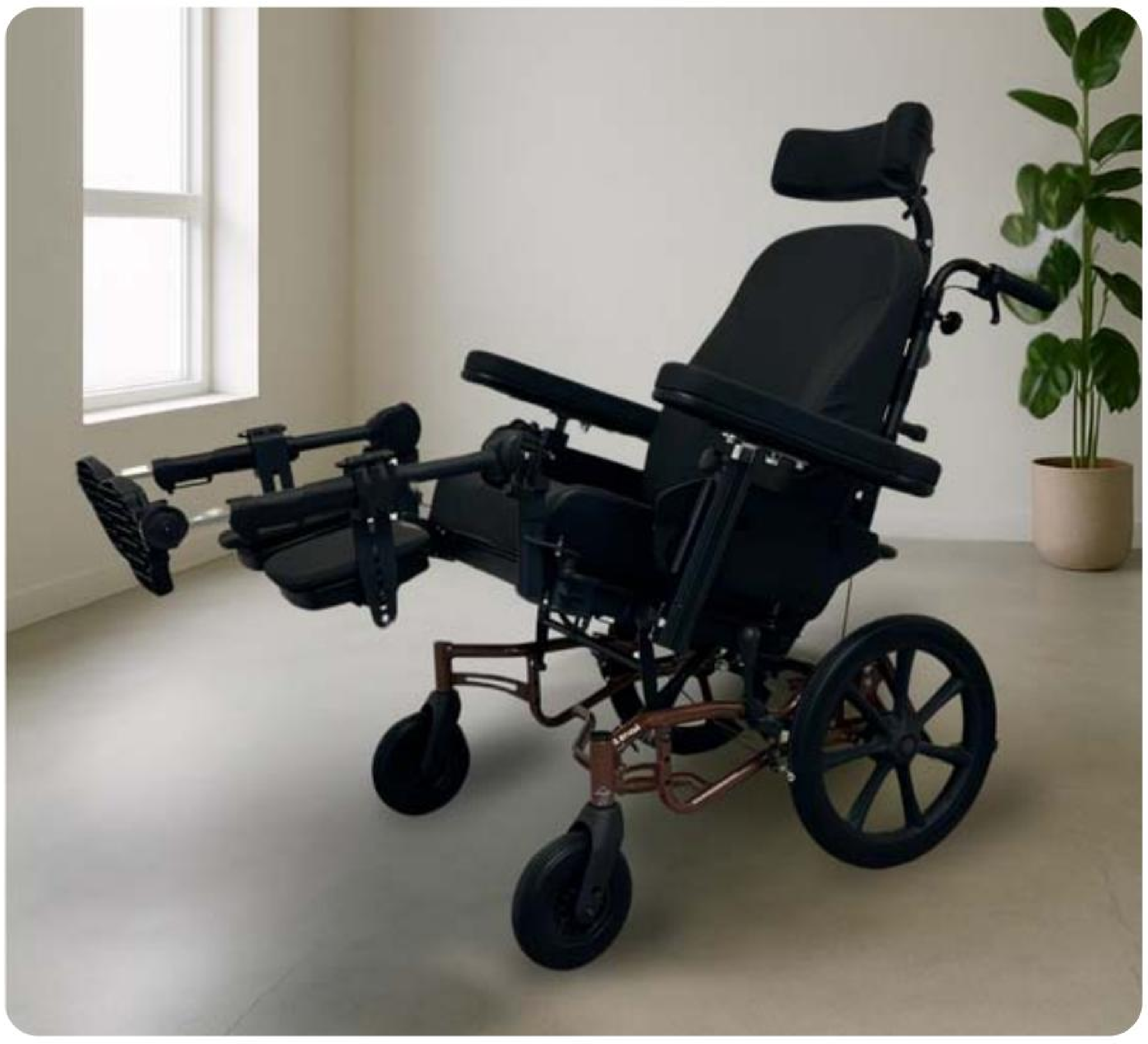
YOUR CARE WITH OUR CHAIR

At **Clearline**, we believe that comfort is not a luxury—it's a necessity. Likewise, postural support is not an expense, it's an investment in your wellbeing.

As **Specialist Seating** providers, we are dedicated to improve quality of life for the elderly, those with disabilities, as well as the families and caregivers who support them. Our small yet passionate team takes pride in offering more than just expertly designed chairs; we provide ongoing care, thoughtful guidance, and unwavering support long after the sale.

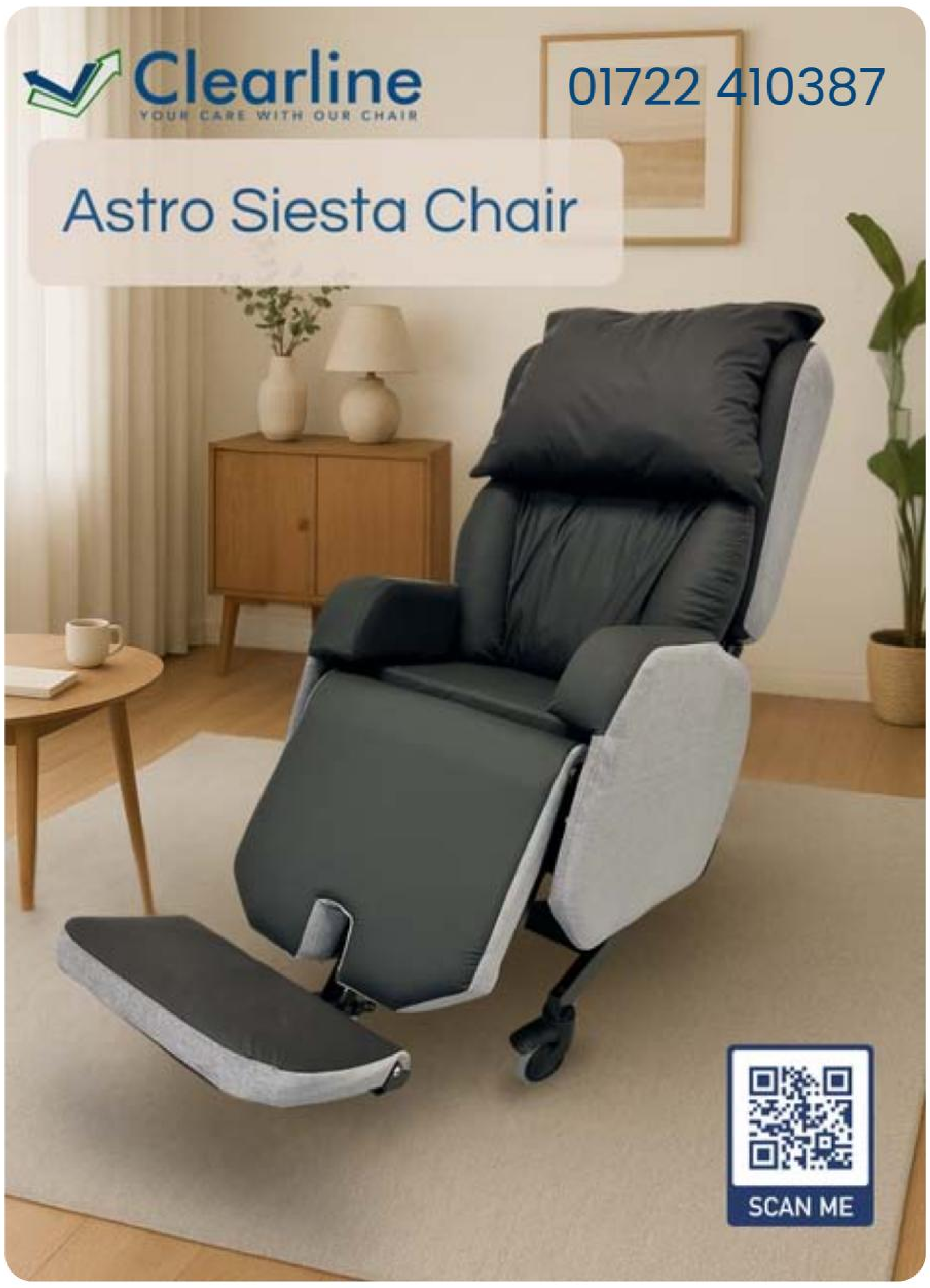
Each chair we deliver is carefully crafted to provide pressure relief, postural support, comfort and improved function for every user. We have witnessed time and again how the right seating solution can significantly transform a person's quality of life.

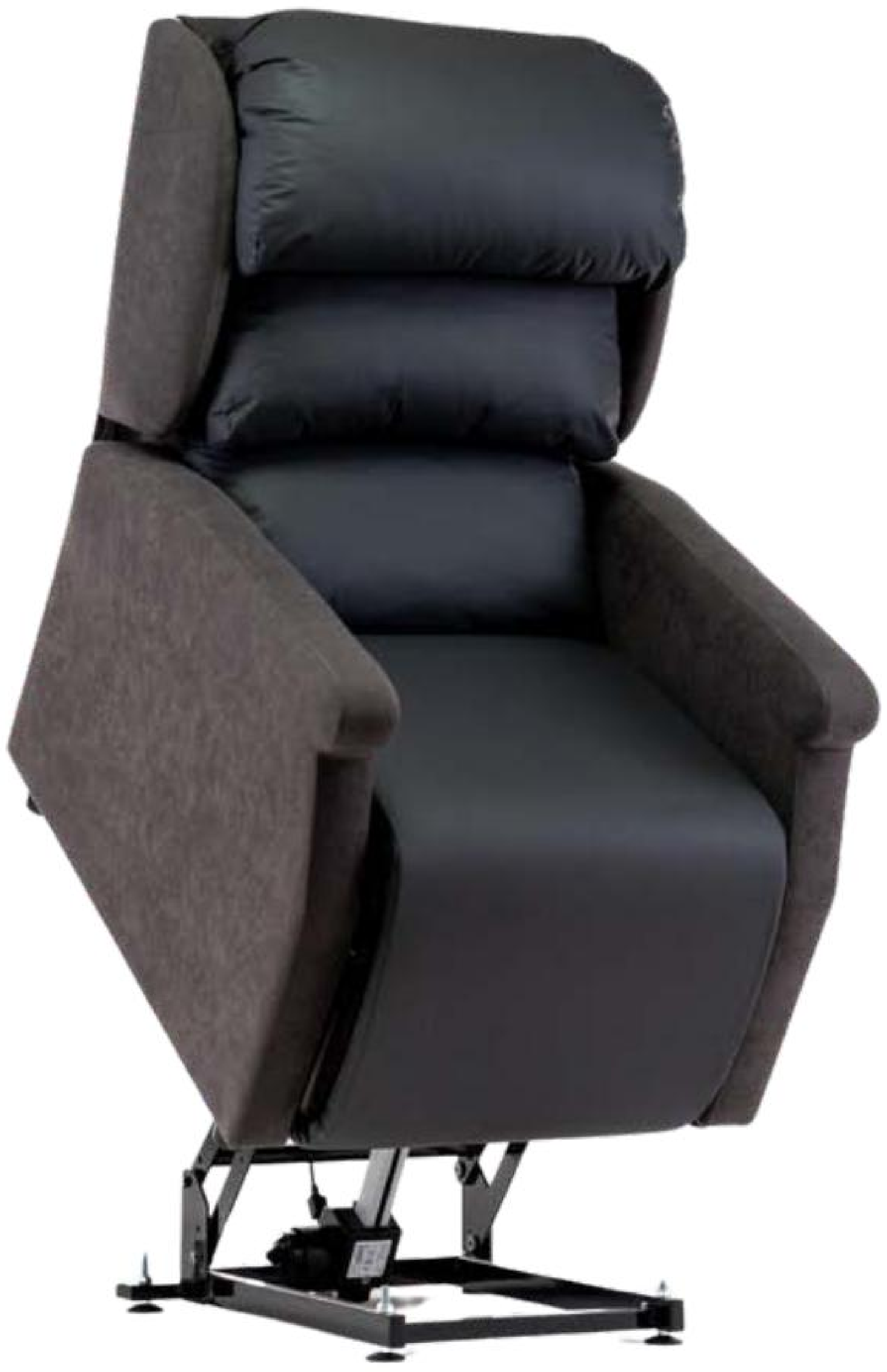
At **Clearline**, it's never about the hard sell—it's about making a meaningful difference, one seat at a time.



Inovys Evo - Years of expertise in one design—A crash tested, versatile, adjustable, and comfortable, Tilt-in-Space wheelchair with tool-free adjustments for users and caregivers alike.

Find out more at www.clearline-uk.com





Astro Adjusta: A comfortable, durable, and easy to clean Riser Recliner—perfect for ambulant or semi-ambulant users needing gentle support.

Mencap, with support from BNY, launch new financial education programme for people with a learning disability

Learning disability charity Mencap and global financial services company BNY have joined forces to increase financial literacy among people with a learning disability, which they hope will support independent living and reduce the risk of people falling victim to online fraud and scams.

Launching this year, the programme, funded by BNY and co-produced with people with a learning disability, covers essential topics such as budgeting, saving, staying safe online, spotting scams and understanding credit and pensions – areas that some people with a learning disability can find challenging.

These resources will be shared widely via Mencap's networks, existing employment support programmes and through special educational needs (SEN) schools and social media platforms to reach as many of the 1.5 million people in the UK with a learning disability, as possible.

Sessions will be available both face-to-face and online and will be led by dedicated Mencap caseworkers and volunteer BNY staff based in Liverpool, Manchester, London and Poole. At least 40 sessions will be delivered across all regions, supporting 420 people with a learning disability.

Ciara Lawrence, Engagement Lead at Mencap, has a learning disability and has previously been a victim of fraud. She said: "It is so important for people like me to have accessible, Easy Read information that can help us understand more about banking, and how to manage our money. Developing these vital skills can give those with a learning disability more financial independence and confidence in everyday tasks."

Charlotte Helena Mukungu, Head of Philanthropy for Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific and Latin America, at BNY, said: "Improving financial knowledge is key to building confidence and greater impendence. Through our collaboration with Mencap, we are pleased to support a programme that equips people with a learning disability with the practical skills to manage their money, make informed decisions and feel more secure in their financial lives."

For more information call the Mencap Learning Disability Helpline on 0808 808 1111 or visit www.mencap.org.uk

---

OT-CPD

Are you an OT seeking CPD that fits around your practice?

OTCPD is your hub for expert-led CPD training, product discovery and professional development.

SCAN HERE

14 Days FREE access to the OTCPD Training Vault

WEBINAR SERIES
TRAINING VAULT
OT CPD ENDORSED
PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY
UK FOCUSED

New low-cost online platform for OTs! Free rolling programme of CPD webinars plus paid members get unlimited access to an ever-growing library of on-demand training. Connect, exchange ideas, grow your network!

www.otcpd.co.uk info@otcpd.co.uk

Marsham Court Hotel
FREE WIFI
LARGE CAR PARK
9 MEETING ROOMS
WEDDINGS & EVENTS

i-swim
SILVER
VisitEngland
Awards for Excellence 2025
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award

MARSHAM COURT HOTEL BOURNEMOUTH

www.marshamcourthotel.co.uk

Get in touch with our friendly Reservations Team to discuss your own personal needs.

Call us on 01202 552111
or email:
reservations@marshamcourthotel.co.uk

- **Sensory Room**
- **Changing Places Toilet & Shower**
- **Profiling Beds & Removable Ceiling Hoists**
- **Connecting Rooms**
- **Meetings, Events & Conference spaces**
- **I-swim Pool Hoist**
- **Laundry Room**
- **Dog-Friendly**

How a paediatric seat "changed his world" for teenager with complex needs

Piran was born with severe Cerebral Palsy. Now 16, he cannot sit unaided and is very restricted in what he can do, further complicated by a dislocated hip.

A unique paediatric bean bag seat - AAT's Chilli Bean - has, according to mum Maria, "changed his world". It has even enabled the whole family to go camping!

AAT refers to Chilli Bean as its "big blue hug": the seat is based around a bean bag which moulds around Piran to exactly support him without pressure points, using vacuum technology to fix or adjust the shaping to match Pirin's precise contours and requirements.

Any adjustment required depending on Piran's needs Maria herself can do, at home. She simply lets a little air back into the Chilli Bean, makes the alteration, then attaches a pump to remove the air inside which fixes the shape.

Maria came across Chilli Bean when Piran was just an infant, when researching equipment to help him. As Pirin has grown, he has had bigger versions to still achieve the same level of precisely moulded, pressure-free posture support.

"Chilli Bean has completely changed his world," says Maria. "We can do so much with it, because we can change the shape ourselves. It supports him to sit and be involved in family life. Because we can exactly shape it ourselves, we can adjust it as he needs to ease a lot of the pain he is constantly in.

"Piran loves music, so we can pop a sound box underneath and he can feel the vibration. He sits in it, lies across it on his tummy. It's easy to move around too- we've taken it camping!"

Chilli Bean is part of AAT's Stabilo range of infinitely re-mouldable posture cushions. The range extends from small wrist/arm supports to mattresses. Each cushion can be precisely moulded as and whenever needed within seconds to provide the exact posture support and correction.

With their advanced neoprene cover, the cushions are fully wipeable, breathable yet waterproof- they can even be used in the bath with AAT's pioneering Aqua Liberty supported bathing system.

AAT Not just The Stairclimber People

Full details including how it works can be found at www.aatgb.com/posture-cushions/

BT, pioneer of carer-friendly employer forum, hosts celebration of workplace support for unpaid carers

60 YEARS
carersUK
Equality: today and tomorrow

Jon James, CEO of BT Business, with Helen Walker, Chief Executive of Carers UK

Carers UK this year marks its 60th anniversary of working to make life better for unpaid carers and by chance the event coincided with the BT Tower marking its own 60th year. It was an opportunity to recognise leading employers who are committed to creating carer-friendly workplaces.

BT has led the way with its practices in this area and helped lay the foundations of the 'Employers for Carers' membership forum over 15 years ago. This champions and promotes effective practice for working carers, with the specialist knowledge of Carers UK.

Around 1 in 7 people are now juggling work with caring for someone who is older, disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, and as our population ages, this is becoming more commonplace. At the same time, Carers UK's research shows that over 600 people a day give up work to care. The consequences of this can be long lasting, not only for unpaid carers who are impacted by poorer health than non-carers, lost income, an inability to save for the future and missed career opportunities.

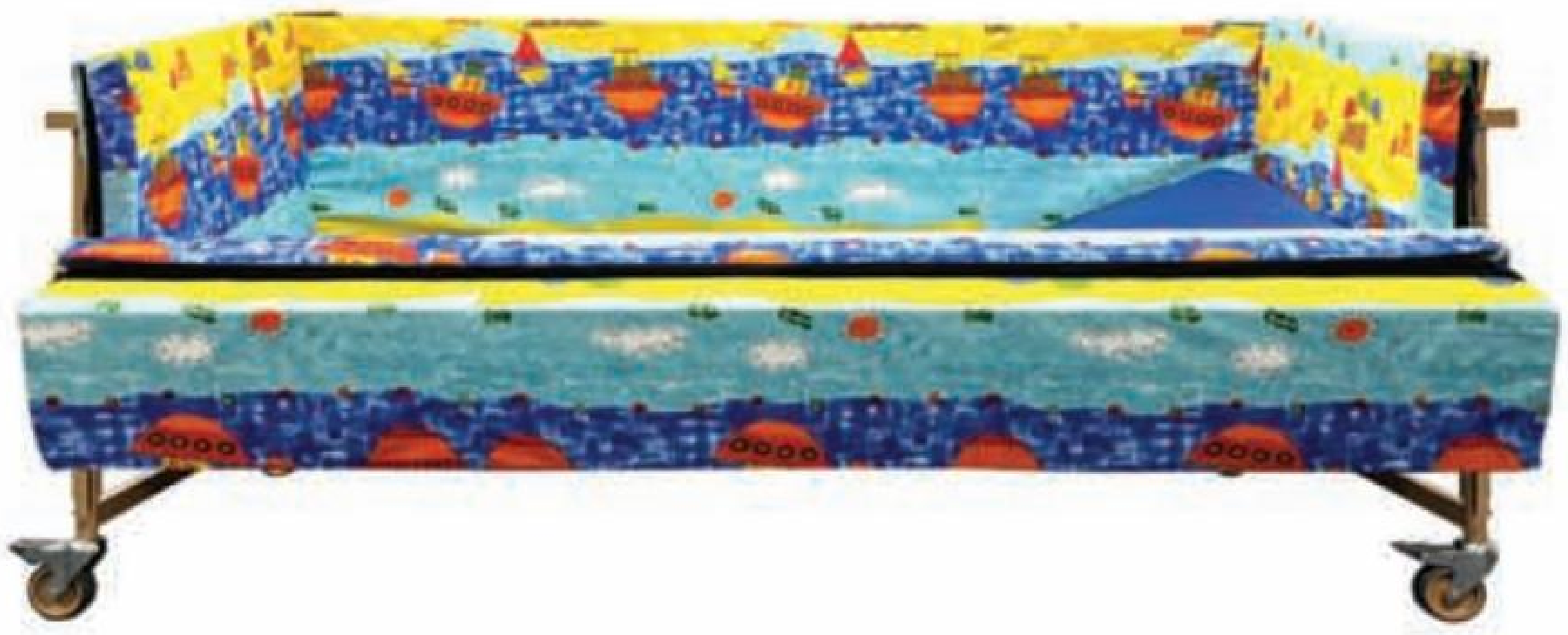
Helen Walker, Chief Executive of Carers UK said: "Employers for Carers began as just 12 companies and organisations, of whom BT was a genuine trailblazer. They understood that their employees with caring responsibilities needed recognition and support to be able to stay in the workplace. There are now 250 members representing over three million employees across the UK."

Jon James, CEO of BT Business, who spoke at the event said: "Our work alongside Carers UK is a crucial part of ensuring all carers at BT are recognised, valued, and supported with their caring responsibilities. We've held this long-term commitment not just because it's the right thing to do, but also as it ensures we enable people to remain productive, benefiting both our company and the wider economy."

Find out more about Employers for Carers and the Carer Confident benchmarking scheme at www.employersforcarers.org

The Kinderkey Safe Bed Surround has provided Over 20 Years of Trusted Protection.

www.kinderkey.co.uk



Over two decades ago, following a hazard warning from the MRHA regarding the risks associated with traditional bed rails, Kinderkey developed a safer alternative.

The Kinderkey Safe Bed Surround

This innovative and proven solution has been **safeguarding clients in their beds for over 20 years.**

Designed with safety and comfort in mind, the surround features **four strong, yet soft protective sides** that securely attach together, leaving **no gaps** that could pose a risk.

The Kinderkey Safe Bed Surround is **manufactured to fit most nursing beds,** with an optional extension available to cover the **headboard and footboard,** offering **enhanced all-round protection.**

Manufactured with **durable materials** to withstand the demands of healthcare environments, our beds are made from **high quality materials** that **prioritise hygiene and longevity.**

To further enhance safety, the surround is firmly fixed to a **base sheet**, effectively **eliminating the danger of entrapment** which is a common concern with standard bed rails.

Join the countless satisfied customers who have made Kinderkey Healthcare Ltd their trusted choice for healthcare solutions. Contact us on 01978 820714 or contact@kinderkey.co.uk

The future of WAVS: eVITA and new conversations with manufacturers

Electric vehicles (EVs) are quickly becoming a part of everyday life. They're great for the environment and give a cleaner, quieter and smoother driving experience. But it has not always been easy converting EVs into WAVs.

We have worked with manufacturers to offer a small number of electric Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (eWAVs) available on the Scheme. But the transition to electric brings new challenges for our WAV converters. One big one? The battery sits under the car. That means in smaller WAVs the floor cannot always be lowered enough to allow space for a wheelchair passenger to sit comfortably.

At the Motability Scheme, we believe everyone should be included in the switch to EVs and we're here to support you. That's why we partnered with the award-winning design company CALLUM. Together, we developed eVITA, a groundbreaking eWAV demonstrator. By producing a demonstrator vehicle, we have showcased what accessible eWAVs could look like for our customers.

eVITA is more than just an idea, it is an important conversation starter with car makers to consider accessible design early on.

Some of the standout features of eVITA include:

- **A groundbreaking new battery layout:** meaning there is more space for passengers
- **A low-angle ramp with rear entry:** makes getting in and out quicker and easier, with less effort
- **Rear projection lamp:** this alerts other drivers when the vehicle is parked
- **Raised windows and a panoramic glass roof:** reducing motion sickness and giving great views
- **Forward-positioned wheelchair space:** this means the wheelchair user can sit nearer to the front, making it easier to chat to the driver and enjoy the journey
- **Wheelchair 'runway guideline'** – to support easier, more confident navigation in and out of the vehicle.

The Motability Foundation grant funded extensive research with disabled drivers to understand their vehicle needs and help create further accessible design principles. Alongside concerns over inclusive vehicle design, 72% of Motability Scheme customers expressed worries over the accessibility of the public charging network.

eVITA demonstrates what's possible when accessibility is placed at the centre of design from the outset. The vehicle was shaped by direct input from Motability Scheme customers, whose experiences and feedback helped identify key pain points around access, comfort, and usability, ensuring the final concept meets real-life needs without compromising on design.

We recently invited Motability Scheme customer Alex and her husband Lionel, to try eVITA. She shared what it felt like to use a car designed with her in mind. "I use my Motability Scheme car for so many things – to get out of the house and take part in everyday life.

"By involving disabled people as equal partners in designing eVITA, Motability Operations has shown a real understanding of the challenges we face. Without a lowered floor, we'd have to drive an electric van which isn't ideal for everyday use, so it's fantastic that the design addresses battery placement.

"As we move to EVs, offering choice and flexibility to disabled people is so important, and doing so will help ensure the UK can create vehicles that truly work for everyone."

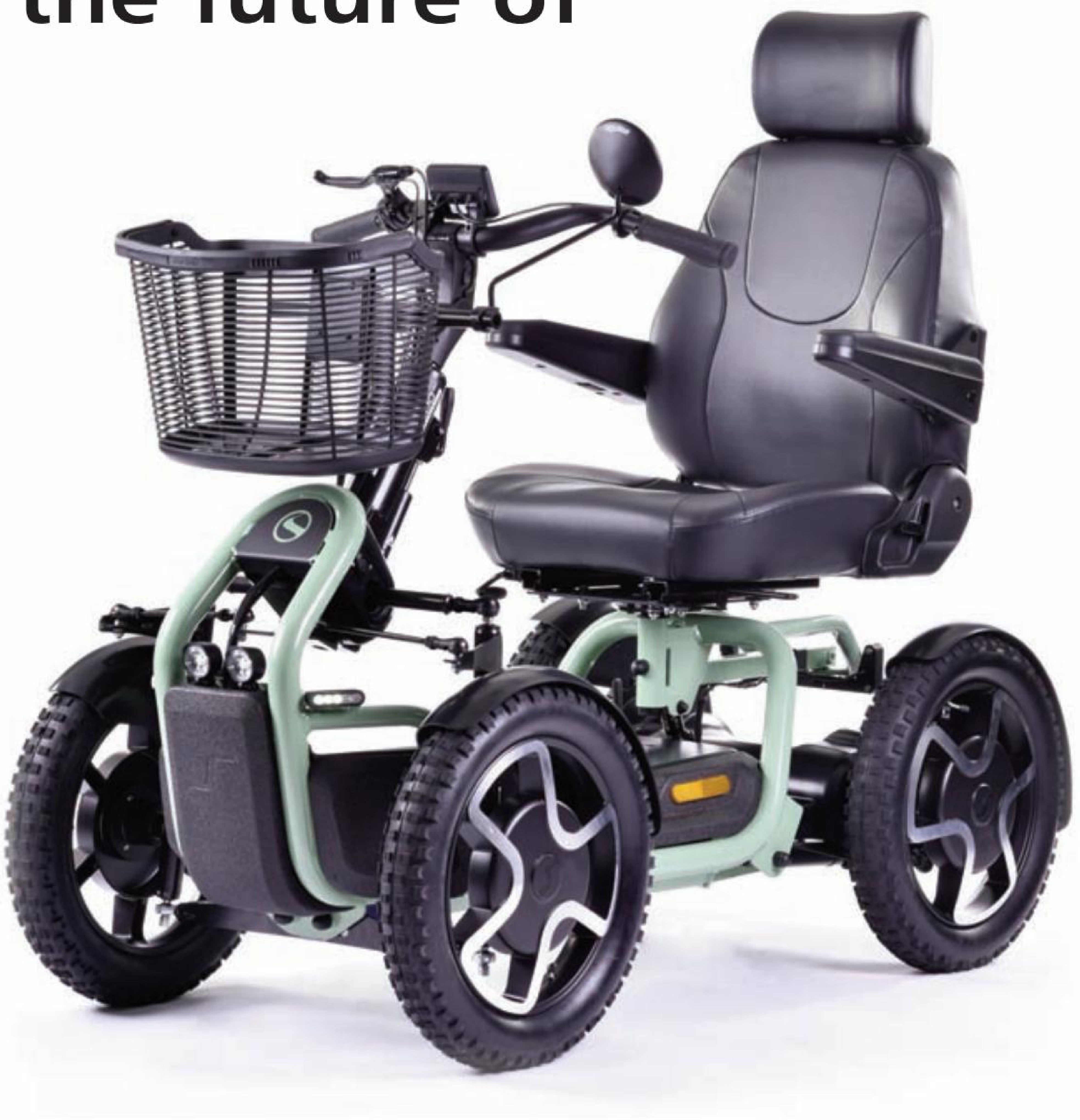
So, what happens next?

eVITA is a concept vehicle, designed to explore what could be possible and we're continuing to work with car makers and converters, so together we can ensure the future of WAVs as we transition to electric.

And there's exciting news. We've already collaborated with Kia on the development of a wheelchair-accessible version of their new car, PV5 which will be coming to the UK in 2026. This is just the start. Our goal is an inclusive future, where no one is left behind.

For more information visit www.motability.co.uk

Sunrise Medical introduces Sterling S800 by Scoozy – the future of mobility



Sunrise Medical, a global leader in assistive mobility solutions, has launched the Sterling S800 by Scoozy—a sleek, modern mobility scooter built for active lifestyles. With its distinctive design, the S800 challenges traditional perceptions and redefines mobility aids.

To empower users to live without limitations, the S800 by Scoozy features four large 18-inch wheels, which are much bigger than typical scooter wheels, providing superior grip on all surfaces. This allows smooth travel on uneven city pavements and even off-road paths.

With a 50km battery range and a top speed of 8mph, users can travel farther and faster without the worry of frequent recharging, navigating urban and rural routes with ease and safety.

The S800 by Scoozy is engineered for maximum comfort and adaptability. It includes an adjustable, ergonomically shaped cushioned seat with backrest and a large open footwell for generous legroom. An adaptive suspension system absorbs shocks from city streets and rugged trails, reducing bounce and ensuring a smooth ride across all terrains.

Designed with safety and accessibility in mind, the S800 by Scoozy features a bicycle-style handlebar with intuitive controls, including a thumb throttle, hand-operated brakes, and multi-adjustable handlebars with cruise control. These elements ensure complete command of the scooter while reducing hand and back strain, making every journey just as enjoyable as the destination.

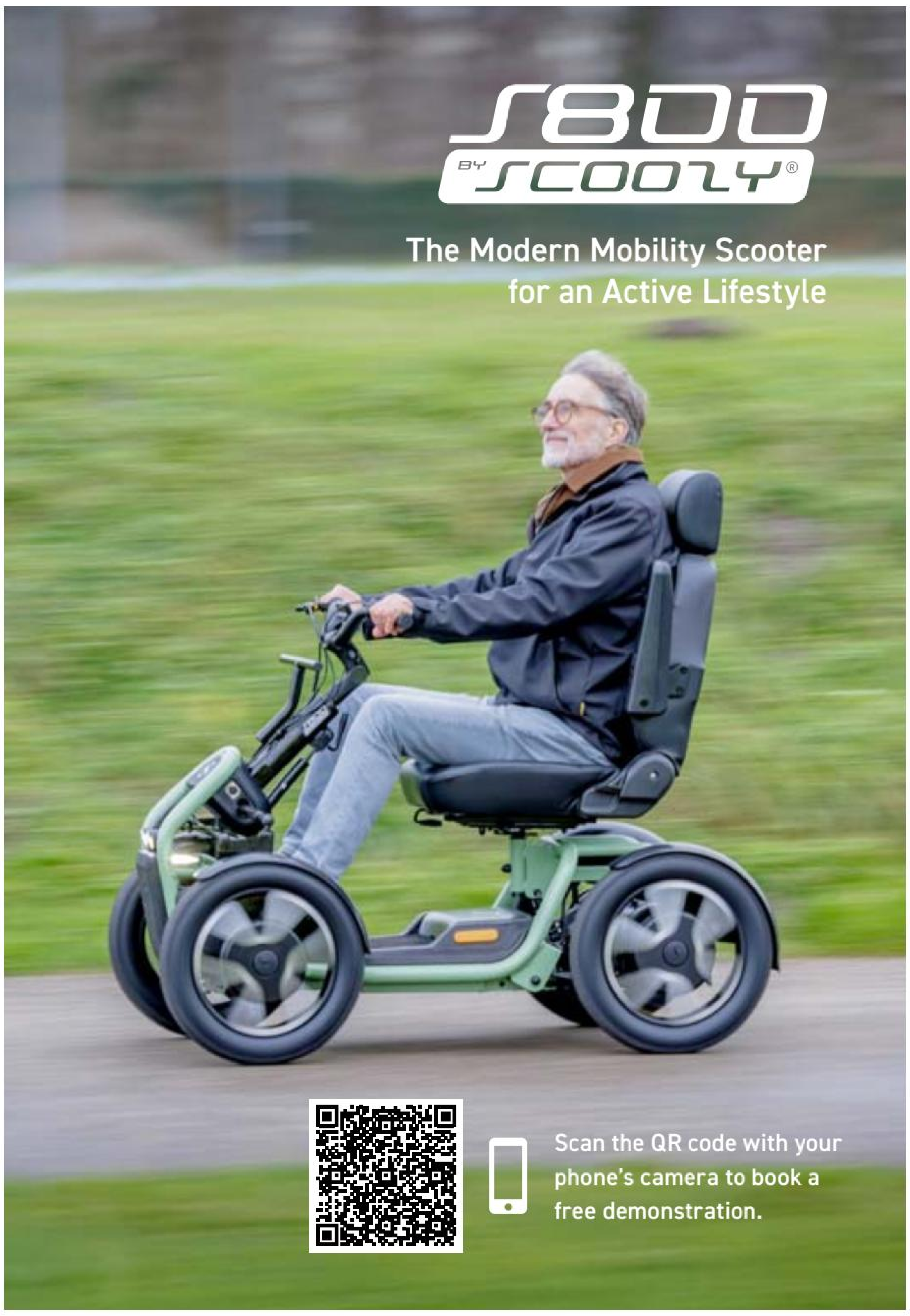
Lee Ratican, National Sales Manager at Sunrise Medical, said: “At Sunrise Medical, we’re committed to improving lives by enabling people to embrace life and challenge boundaries—whether it’s shopping independently or exploring a rural footpath.

“There are many misconceptions about traditional mobility scooters, and as a global leader in high-quality assistive mobility devices and services, we’re proud to introduce the Sterling S800 by Scoozy. This modern and eye-catching mobility scooter is designed for real-world adventures.

The Sterling S800 by Scoozy is available in the UK via authorised retailers and will soon be offered through the Motability Scheme. Prospective users are encouraged to arrange a test drive to experience its performance firsthand.

For more information or to book a demonstration, visit:

www.sunrisemedical.co.uk/mobility-scooters/sterling/mobility-scooters/sterling-s800-by-scoozy



Study reveals the UK's most wheelchair-accessible cities – Oxford takes the lead

There are many beautiful and historic places to live in the UK, but for people in wheelchairs, another crucial factor to consider when choosing where to live is accessibility.

According to a new study, Oxford, York, and Blackpool are the UK's most wheelchair-accessible cities, with other great locations also ranking highly, such as Brighton, Edinburgh, and Cambridge.

The research, carried out by experts at leading stairlift company Halton Stairlifts, analysed five key factors across 81 major UK cities to assess their level of wheelchair accessibility. These factors included the availability of wheelchair-accessible restaurants, tours and outdoor activities, accommodation, disabled parking areas, and public toilets per 100,000 residents.

A weighting was then assigned to each factor, reflecting its importance within the analysis, and used to calculate an overall index score out of 100 for each entry, upon which the final ranking is based.

According to the findings, Oxford is the most wheelchair-accessible city in the UK, with a score of 90.54. The city offers 163 wheelchair-friendly restaurants and 115 accessible attractions, combined with 37 disabled parking areas and 37 accessible public toilets. Oxford is by far the most inclusive city in the ranking, with a score 43.1% higher than the runner-up.

With a score of 63.27, York secures second place. While the city has a great number of wheelchair-accessible restaurants and activities, 243 and 46, respectively, its score drops because there aren't many parking and toilet options with disability access—only eight parking areas with disability parking and 10 accessible public toilets.

Blackpool comes third, with a score of 61.71. The city ranks above the average of 5 in all but one factor—toilets with disability access (there are only six public facilities with disability access)—though the number of tours and outdoor activities only scored 5.26 (there are 19 wheelchair-accessible activities available), highlighting the areas where the city can improve.

Scotland's largest city, Glasgow, scores 60.33. The city ranked particularly highly in factors such as parking areas and toilets with disability access—275 and 75 wheelchair-accessible parking and toilets, respectively—but its ranking dropped due to the scarcity of wheelchair-accessible units in hotels (only 18).

On the other hand, Poole is the least wheelchair-accessible city in the UK, followed by Derry, with scores of 13.33 and 16.97, respectively. Both present significant obstacles for wheelchair users, with a concerningly low number of accessible parking areas and toilets—they have none.

Next is Bolton, scoring 20.40 and showing a lack of accessible hotel units and activities. Kingston upon Hull ranks as the fourth least wheelchair-accessible city, with almost no accessible hotel units—only six listings.

Neil McKenzie, Director at Halton Stairlifts, commented on the findings, "Our research highlights how UK cities are handling accessibility, showing the varying levels of preparedness across different factors, from restaurants and activities to hotels, parking and toilets.

"While it's encouraging to see places like Oxford, which has a stellar ranking, leading the way, there's a clear indication that many cities need to prioritise improvements in accessibility. Even among the better prepared, their overall ranking was astoundingly close to the average, showing they also must put in the work to actually be inclusive. Every individual should have equal access to public spaces and services, and it's important that we continue to make efforts towards that goal."

For information on Halton Stairlifts, who carried out the research, visit www.haltonstairliftsltd.co.uk

Leading online travel agent strives to make camping more accessible and provides tips on the best spots this summer

Wick River Campsite

Camping La Media Legua

Last summer, global outdoor accommodation booking platform Pitchup.com launched an initiative to improve accessibility in the outdoor travel sector.

Partnering with Purple Goat, a leading disability-led inclusive marketing agency, Pitchup.com conducted a comprehensive survey to identify key challenges faced by those with neurodivergence, chronic illness and physical disabilities when seeking outdoor accommodations.

Pitchup.com's survey polled over 2,000 respondents and, using this research, they created a new set of search filters that empower travellers to book accommodation tailored to their needs.

The new accessibility filters include features like well-lit paths, accessible parking, dedicated quiet space and wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, and features for fixed accommodations, like step-free access. Park managers can upload photos to illustrate these features and provide additional details, like the size of doorways or where facilities are located, for example.

"To search using the new filters, find the 'Accessibility' section on the search page and select the features you require. The search will then only return parks that fit your criteria. You can use any combination that suits your needs, for example, 'Accessible parking at pitch' and 'Pitch close to accessible bathrooms'", says Holly Bland, Accessibility Project Manager at Pitchup.com.

The filters have already been used over 35,000 times, and new customers make up 50% of searches. The most popular filters so far have been 'Accessible parking by pitch', 'Wheelchair accessible toilet' and 'Large spacious shower'.

Bland said: "Almost 1,700 camping, glamping and caravan sites have added accessibility information so far, and some of our favourites include:

- Bredon-Vale Caravan and Camping, Worcestershire. A dark sky site with beautiful views and a friendly welcome. A reviewer said, "My friend required the disabled facilities and for the first time ever found her needs fully catered for. The tracks were suitable for a mobility scooter and the disabled toilet and shower had the correct rails and perches."
- Wick River Campsite, Caithness, Scotland. A pretty, flat, dog-friendly site with a lovely wheelchair accessible bathroom and hot showers.
- Camping La Media Legua, Alicante, Benidorm. A well-equipped site five minutes' drive from Costa Blanca beaches, with an indoor and outdoor pool, both with pool hoists."

Bland says, "We've been thrilled to see how many customers have taken an outdoor holiday for the first time since the new search filters launched. We're continuing to work closely with park managers to raise awareness of the filters and encourage them to add accessibility information, so that customers with access needs have more choice and flexibility on where to stay in the UK and beyond."

PITCHUP

Book an accessible outdoor holiday on Pitchup.com

What makes a Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle (WAV) Different?

If you've never travelled in a WAV, your first journey might feel quite different from a standard car trip. That's because WAVs are converted so a wheelchair user can stay in their wheelchair when travelling. And that changes a few things, for drivers and passengers.

Graham Lloyd has worked with WAV converters for years. Here, he shares what you can expect if you're new to WAVs.

What are the biggest changes you've seen in WAVs in recent years? How have they improved?

One of the biggest improvements in Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) has been how ramps work. In the past, ramps were heavy and tricky to lift. Now, many WAV converters have added something called gas struts. These help take the weight of the ramp, so it feels lighter and easier to move.

Another great change is the inside of the vehicle. It's now quieter and more comfortable for wheelchair users. Converters use plywood under the floor. This helps stop echoing, so it sounds nicer inside. The flooring and side panels are better too. They use materials like fibreglass and carpet that's similar to what you'd find in a car boot.

What's the biggest difference between driving a WAV and driving a car?

One of the biggest differences is ground clearance. Because a lot of WAVs have lowered floors you do not have the same ground clearance as a car, so if you travel over a speed bump a little too fast then the bottom of the WAV may hit the bump.

As the wheelchair user remains seated in their wheelchair, how does this compare to sitting in a standard car seat?

You do not necessarily have seats next to you, so it can feel a bit odd compared to sitting on a shared rear seat in a standard car.

In a WAV, you're seated in the wheelchair which, although safely restrained, is not fixed to the floor in the same way as a car seat so you may feel some additional movement. And as you're generally sat higher than if you're sitting in a car seat, your eyeline could be higher, which could give you a different view out of the windows.

How important is it to test drive a WAV?

It's the most important thing! Have as many test drives as you possibly can, customers normally lease their WAV for five years, so you need a good indication of what it's like to live with it now and for the next few years.

Are there any other options aside from a WAV if you are a wheelchair user and struggling with a standard car?

If you'd prefer to stay in a standard car then the Motability Scheme offers a range of adaptations to help get in and out of a car. A good option for wheelchair users are person hoists, these enable you to lift someone out of their wheelchair and guide them into the front passenger seat. If you're a full-time wheelchair user and you struggle to transfer yourself onto a car seat, with or without assistance, then a WAV is your best option.

How do Nearly New WAVs differ to a new WAV?

Nearly New WAVs could be a more affordable way to lease a Motability Scheme WAV with a lower Advance Payment than a new WAV. Nearly New WAVs are on a three-year lease, as opposed to new WAVs which are a five-year lease. If a customer has a condition that frequently changes then the shorter lease may suit them better.

If you're new to the Motability Scheme and would like to find out more about leasing a WAV, you can browse our selection of models by visiting www.motability.co.uk

Sojadis
PLUG & DRIVE

Looking to drive with confidence and comfort?

Sojadis
PLUG & DRIVE
Sojadis
PLUG & DRIVE

ACCELEVER is an award-winning **dual-hand throttle system** developed and manufactured in France by Sojadis. It allows drivers with limited leg mobility **accelerate easily**, using two **discreet** levers behind the steering wheel.

- Winner – Rehacare International Innovation Award 2024
- Compatible with automatic vehicles (24+ brands)
- Easy to use, safe and ergonomic
- Installed by certified professionals
- ECE R10 certified – tested over 500,000 cycles
- Made in France

Contact us
www.sojadis.com
+33 (0)2 41 64 05 58

Drive your life.

Isaac Harvey MBE

Realising My Value: My Unexpected Lesson in Self-Worth

Growing up with a disability where I have no arms and a weak pelvis (meaning I'm not able to walk), I relied on others for everything. From eating and drinking to going to the toilet. None of it could be done without support. But it didn't stop there. I also needed people to lift me in and out of my wheelchair and help me take part in experiences like skydiving and skiing. Yes, those things have happened, but we won't go into them today.

Having to depend on people for the basics of life gave me a deep sense of gratitude. I appreciated everyone who helped me, even when they were simply doing what was normal. That gratitude shaped how I saw the world. It made me want to give back. So, I volunteered. A lot. I worked with different charities and organisations, offering my time and skills wherever I could. One charity in particular had played a huge role in helping me grow more independent. One of the services they provided was a residential service, something the local authority had given us access to. I still remember my mum saying we had to take it. Her words were, “If we refuse it, then you can't expect to get anything like that down the line.” Looking back, especially after what I've experienced this past year, I know that statement isn't strictly true. But anyways, we move forward.

At the time, all I knew was that this charity helped me. So, when they started preparing for a big anniversary year full of interviews, events and campaigns, I wanted to be involved. Every time they asked me to do something, I said yes. It felt like the right thing to do. I owed them, in a way. But somewhere along the line, the yeses started piling up. I was tired. Burning out. Yet I kept pushing through because I thought it was just what you do when you want to give back. This was also around the same time that I was an advocate for young boys with disabilities for the charity, where I was there to support them. I had so much to give. Until someone who also worked within the charity pulled me aside and said something I didn't expect.

“You do realise they're taking advantage of you, right?”

I didn't know how to respond, as it just didn't make any sense to me. I didn't believe it. Surely not them. Not the people who had helped me. Not the organisation that stood for empowerment and community. But as I reflected on it, and as the opportunities kept flooding in without any sort of compensation, it became painfully clear. They had pretty much crossed the line between honouring contributions and overusing my kindness.

That moment didn't fix everything, but it planted a seed. I began to understand my value a little better. I started questioning things more. But I was still learning. It wasn't until years later, when I officially launched my own business, that the shift really started to click. For so long, my life and work were intertwined. I loved what I did and if someone needed help with a video or project, I'd jump in without even thinking to ask if they had a budget.

But a business is different. A business needs to make money. If it doesn't, it fails. Simple as that. For some reason, I could easily apply that logic to my business but never to myself as an individual. Even now, it's hard to put them together. Still, running the business started changing how I saw things. I'm not perfect at it, but I say no a lot more now than people think I do. And most opportunities I end up accepting are paid ones. About two years after starting the business, I connected with a mentor who really cemented this mindset shift. He made it clear that I deserve to be paid. That my skills have value. That I have value. And honestly, that has been one of the biggest signs of growth in my life so far.

One of the moments that really stuck with me was when we spoke about my writing. I told him how much I enjoyed blogging and how I really wanted to turn it into some kind of passive income stream. I write anyway, so it felt like a natural thing to turn into something more passive. But he gently pointed out the reality. He helped me break it down. I didn't want to believe what he ended up telling me. I was determined to make it work. But the numbers didn't lie.

Across my blogging up until this point, I'd earned under $300. That might sound like a decent figure at a glance, but when you consider that each article took around three to four hours to write (which also included formatting, editing, creating images with AI, scheduling and promoting), that added up to a huge amount of time. I had published 48 articles, meaning with very basic maths, I was essentially earning under $0.64 an hour. When you really think about it like that, it doesn't make sense.

So, I made a shift. I stopped pouring so much of my energy into work that wasn't really seeing any value. I shifted my perspective, where the opportunity to be here came along. And as this is my first ever article here, I just want to say how grateful I am to be a writer for Ability Needs Magazine. This alone really helps me see my value.

The truth is that people look at me and think I've got it all figured out. They see the public speaking, the projects, the confidence. But what they don't see is how much work it has taken to understand my own worth. Living with a disability means often having to prove yourself just to be seen, sometimes having to do it twofold. And it can honestly be exhausting. So, when someone does recognise your value, it really means something. That said, doing things for free isn't wrong. Life runs on volunteers. From community centres to hospitals to festivals, volunteers keep the world spinning. And giving your time can be incredibly rewarding. But there's a difference between giving your time freely and giving it away in a way that drains you. If it's not uplifting you or helping you grow, it might be time to rethink where you're putting your energy.

Knowing your worth is a journey. One I'm still on. It's not something that everyone gets overnight. But every step toward recognising it has allowed me to grow, getting me closer to the kind of life I want to live. And if I can do it, so can you.

“The conversion quality and the ease of use made the decision easier for us”

Brotherwood were delighted to deliver Lewis’ new Wheelchair Accessible Vehicle – an amazing new Boundless Blue Ford Tourneo Connect ‘Active’, with our inclusive C’arete conversion – right on time for his birthday!

We caught up with Lewis and Mum & Dad, Claire & Mark, to see how they were enjoying their new vehicle, and what led them to choosing the compact yet spacious Tourneo Connect for their family transport.

Choosing a WAV

“We chose this particular model of car because of a requirement to downsize on the existing VW Caravelle WAV we’ve owned since 2015. We no longer needed such a large vehicle for the vast majority of Lewis’ transport needs, and the provision for 6 passenger seats along with Lewis was no longer necessary.

Before choosing the Ford we had reviewed several vehicles from a number of WAV providers, but the internal headroom and the rear door opening height were critical factors for Lew’s chair, and in many ways narrowed the choice significantly. In saying that, we were still very impressed with the design, functionality, performance and aesthetics of the Ford, so would have probably gone with it anyway.”

“We reviewed Ford WAVs from 2 suppliers, but the conversion quality and the ease of use of the Brotherwood model made the decision easier for us, and in our opinions compensated for the higher upfront payment that needed to be made through Motability.”

Favourite Features

“Every trip we’re finding something new and interesting on the car, like all the driver assist features, automatic headlight raising and dimming feature, heated steering wheel, heated seats, Apple CarPlay, etc. The car is packed with lots of toys and gadgets that are proving really useful and worthwhile. The car itself is really nice to drive, compact in size, comfortable, quiet and with all the performance you would require.

The conversion quality as previously stated is excellent and appears extremely robust. The counterbalance ramp is very clever, and takes a lot of strain out of lowering and raising the ramp. Whilst we had some initial reservations about using the PAWRS system, and how Lew’s carers would adapt to it, this was soon overcome after a few trips. The main carer has actually said she prefers this system to the one on his old car, so a big thumbs up here!”

“Visibility in the car is excellent through that massive window screen, and I’m so glad we went for the Panoramic roof which brings so much light and airiness into the vehicle as well.”

Versatility

The vehicle will be used for all of Lew’s transportation needs, be it short trips to the local therapy centres or long trips to places like Blackpool and beyond on mini breaks. To give some indication, his last vehicle did 120,000 miles over 8 years, so was constantly in operation.

Personal Service

“The service from Brotherwood was excellent, and a big shout out for Jamie who did an amazing job in demonstrating and explaining the vehicle on the first visit, and then handing the vehicle over on the second visit. He was polite, patient (which is critical in family situations like ours!), articulate, clear, concise, and a lovely guy to deal with. He’s a great asset and ambassador to your business. He clearly has a great depth of knowledge of the products he works with, and also the products he sells against, which is always useful in trying to evaluate one manufacturers offering against another. Sorry we kept him hanging around so long!”

“We also appreciated the absence of a “Hard Sell” approach from Brotherwood compared to some other WAV companies in the market. Decisions on things like this can, unfortunately, be drawn out processes, and the continued chasing on the phone is neither welcomed or required.”

Ongoing Support

“We would definitely recommend Brotherwood and this vehicle to other prospective customers. Early days yet, but first impressions have been good, and we are confident that the quality of ongoing support and communications will more than meet with our expectations.

“The bow for Lew’s birthday was a lovely touch!”

For more information contact Brotherwood today on 0330 1747 555 or visit Brotherwood.com

ENGINEERING TO ENABLE

Designed
& Engineered
in Great Britain

4.9/5
★★★★★
Independent Service Rating
based on 307 verified reviews
feefo

Compact Outside Inclusive Inside

easy to
drive
4.5m
long

Ford PRO Convertor

Brotherwood C'arete | Ford Tourneo Connect

✓ **In Stock** | Short Lead Times

4 Seats + Central Wheelchair Location

Flat, Level Lowered Floor with **56" Internal Headroom**

with Android Auto / Apple Carplay, Adaptive Cruise Control, Rear View Camera, Front & Rear Parking Sensors, Navigation & Voice Control

from ~~£10,995~~

£9,995 Advance Payment

Motability Scheme

Advance Payment valid Quarter 3 2025. £1,000 Additional Manufacturer Support on selected Ford Tourneo Connect Models only. Offer applies to new customer orders from 20/06/2025.

Brotherwood® Conversion Includes:

- ☑ Comfortable Flat, Level Lowered Floor Conversion
- ☑ Inclusive Central Wheelchair Location - Between Two Second-Row Seats
- ☑ PAWRS Powered Loading System - No Pushing Required
- ☑ Easy-to-Use STORQ Self-Tensioning Wheelchair Restraints
- ☑ Optional 200KG Wheelchair Restraint System Upgrade

Request a brochure or FREE, no-obligation home demonstration at Brotherwood.com

FREEPHONE
0330 1741 891

40 Years 1985-2025

BROTHERWOOD®
ENGINEERING TO ENABLE

Tanni's View

Baroness Grey-Thompson DBE writes for Ability Needs

It is hard to write a column for this edition without talking about the impact on disabled people of the legislation that is currently working its way through Parliament. The potential benefits cuts have been trialled through the media, which is often used to test out public opinion. For months there have been discussions about the changes to the benefits system but now it has started for real. It is likely that there are going to be a lot of changes by the time it has been through both Houses.

I recently wrote an article and talked about how legislation never operates in isolation, either what we are changing from previous legislation or what is happening in the UK. I do have a number of concerns about how disabled people are being portrayed in the media. It seems that it is a difficult time. I believe that the welfare system needs reform. There are a huge number of young people who are in the system, and it seems more sensible to me to try and prevent them getting there in the first place.

This is also tied up with the passage of The Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill. It has passed through the House of Commons as a private members bill (PMB). This is not something that was in the Government manifesto and as a PMB it can only be debated on Fridays. We do not normally sit on a Friday, so additional dates have had to be put in the diary. We have been told that this Bill has been forensically debated but that is something I disagree with.

The two ends of the building operate very differently. People like and dislike the House of Lords in equal measures and it often depends on what we are doing. We are often told that because we are appointed and not elected then we are not democratic. In the Commons amendments (changes that people want to make to the Bill) are selected for debate and the same with the votes. So there can be great chunks of a Bill that are not debated. In the Lords we debate almost line by line and all amendments get debated (usually in groups of similar points) and we can vote on anything. There are some MP's who apparently have said that they are OK with the Bill how it is, and it is up to the Lords to fix it. This is not always particularly fair, but it is part of our job. When I try to explain what our role is, the easiest way I can say it is that our job is to say to the Government of the day that they need to think again.

While there have been a very small number of disabled people who have written to me to say that they do support the Bill, there are many, many more who have written to say that they do not. There is still no organisation of or for disabled people who support it and in the last few weeks the Royal College of Psychiatrists, The Royal College of GP's and most recently the Royal College of Pathologists have said that their members are not qualified to carry out the duties imposed on them by the Bill as it currently stands.

There is a long way to go in this Bill and the same for Welfare Reform. The cost of welfare is not sustainable in its current format, so something needs to be done. But every time I have been involved in debates we are told that the Bill will help the most vulnerable. What is being played out in the media as well is the amount of opposition that it might face. Until we get to the voting stages we won't know but it should be early July. We are being told that it is going to save £5bn but I don't know how to even begin to work out what it will really save. Vicky Foxcroft has already resigned as a whip, which is not an easy thing to do, and I have a lot of respect for her for doing so. It is one thing to talk about stepping down from your role, but it is another thing for it to happen.

The welfare bill is already being called one of the biggest tests to date for this Government and there are plenty of people in the Lords who will work to protect disabled people.

Crelling Harnesses Ltd.

Tel: 01253 852298 Email: info@crelling.com www.crelling.com

Crelling Harnesses manufacture a full range of special needs harnesses suitable for use on all kinds of equipment including wheelchairs, buggies, scooters, shower chairs, bathing equipment, stair lifts and seats in cars, buses and aircraft etc.
The vehicle harnesses are designed to be worn in conjunction with the existing safety belts to provide additional postural support and/or to offer a certain degree of restraint when used for those passengers with behavioural problems or learning difficulties.

BHTA British Healthcare Trades Association

tsi APPROVED CODE TRADINGSTANDARDS.GOV.UK

We make simple belts and full supportive harnesses for all kinds of special needs, including challenging behaviour

Millions living with ‘invisible’ disabilities could be missing out on £30,000 support payment

Amy Francis-Smith

Millions of Brits living with hidden disabilities could be missing out on up to £30,000 in support payments, according to experts from stairlift and home lift company Stannah.

Hidden – or ‘invisible’ – disabilities could include the likes of long COVID, chronic fatigue or Parkinson’s, and diagnoses for these disabilities have risen by nearly two-thirds (63%) since 2018. Despite their lack of visible signs, these disabilities can hugely impact daily life, making the need for home adaptations significant.

Individuals with hidden disabilities should explore options available to them in the form of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – worth up to £30,000 – to fund adaptations over £1,000 in their homes to make life easier and keep their independence. Most local authorities will pay for small adaptations under £1,000, if eligible.

Not to be confused with Personal Independence Payments (PIP) – which provides financial support to people with long-term health conditions – the DFG is designed to be spent on adaptations to make homes more accessible for those with disabilities, which could include wheelchair ramps, a stairlift/home lift or a wet room upgrade.

The maximum loan the DFG can provide differs in each UK country:

- England: Up to £30,000
- Wales: Up to £36,000
- Northern Ireland: Up to £25,000
- Scotland: Alternative local council funding is available.

The government has also announced a review of social care along with £86 million in extra funding for the DFG this financial year. Building works are also subject to no VAT under the grant.

Amy Francis-Smith, Inclusive Design expert for Stannah explains: “The DFG is a great financial aid to those who need to adapt their home to be able to move around more safely. Often though people with hidden disabilities can face greater challenges in accessing the grant compared to those with more obviously visible conditions.

“Just because a disability isn’t visible, doesn’t mean it’s not worthy of receiving a grant which can enhance the recipient's life. Awareness of the grant – and how to access it – is crucial, as it can enable people to maintain independence and live in the home they love for as long as possible.”

Receiving either PIP or the DFG doesn’t necessarily entitle a receiver to access both types of support. To access the DFG, applicants’ situations are means-tested and only awarded pending an assessment from an occupational therapist, which your local council will arrange.

The process of accessing the DFG is a stark challenge for people with hidden disabilities. Amy Francis-Smith continues, “The cost of living remains astronomical, with no signs of slowing down, so the DFG has never been more critical for those struggling to move around the home.

“To ensure the support reaches those who so desperately need it, though, the grant must become more accessible. How it’s tested currently makes it difficult for people to receive the grant and could deter some from applying in the first place if their disabilities are less visible.”

Stannah can be contacted on 0800 715 485
www.stannah.com

Stannah is a world leader in lifting products, supplying stairlifts, passenger lifts, escalators and moving walkways, vertical platform lifts, goods, and service lifts. It is one of Britain’s leading engineering companies and remains an independent, family owned and run firm. The company’s experience of the lift industry is unsurpassed, originating in cargo lifts in the 1860s. In 1975, Stannah designed its first affordable, quick-to-install and easy-to-use stairlift and has since sold over one million stairlifts worldwide.

BEAUTIFUL JERSEY

Maison des Landes – Where accessibility meets excellence, and every guest feels at home

Stay at Jersey's accessible hotel and explore an island full of history, culture, inclusive activities and beautiful scenery.

There are few places in the British Isles where you can enjoy dolphin-spotting, golden beaches, historic castles, a world-famous zoo, and celebrated local cuisine – all in one trip. But in Jersey, you can. Even better, many of the island's attractions are fully inclusive, with beach wheelchairs, adapted boat trips, and assisted surfing all available to ensure that everyone can enjoy everything this beautiful island has to offer.

At the heart of it all is Maison des Landes, Jersey's only hotel specifically designed to offer outstanding accessibility for all guests. Nestled in the picturesque parish of St Ouen, overlooking Jersey's National Park, the hotel blends the peaceful charm of the countryside with the very best in modern inclusive design – from fully accessible wet rooms and ceiling hoists to a warm indoor pool with full access and a fleet of fully adapted minibuses."

YOUR DREAM DESTINATION

Maison des Landes is a place where guests don't just stay – they relax, recharge, and feel truly looked after. Set in tranquil gardens with panoramic views, the hotel is a haven of calm and comfort.

And when it comes to food? You're in for a treat. Jersey is known for its culinary excellence, and Head Chef Martyn and his team proudly uphold that tradition, serving up fresh, locally sourced dishes that keep guests smiling from breakfast to bedtime.Our team takes real pride in what they do – and it shows. Friendly, dedicated, and always willing to go the extra mile, the staff at Maison des Landes are the heart and soul of the hotel. Whether you need a little extra support or just a warm welcome, nothing is too much trouble.

Here's what one guest, the Blackburn family from York, had to say after a recent stay:

"This is the first real hotel I've stayed in since becoming disabled and unable to walk. All I can say is that we were completely blown away by the whole experience. The hotel is modern and bright and caters for every disability. I felt like I was on a proper holiday – it was far better than I could have imagined. Best accessible hotel there could be! Everything sorted for a great stay."

With 15 out of 23 rooms fully adapted to suit a range of needs, you can book with confidence, knowing everything has been thought through – and done properly.

SO MUCH TO SEE AND DO

A fleet of fully adapted minibuses is ready to take guests wherever they want to go – including transfers from the airport or harbour. Once at the hotel, an exciting daily programme of accessible activities awaits, including visits to:

- Jersey Zoo
- The Botanical Gardens
- The Jersey War Tunnels
- The Maritime Museum

Guests can even get out on the water with Wetwheels, offering thrilling trips in a specially adapted catamaran, or try assisted surfing with local ocean therapy charity Healing Waves.

Getting to Jersey is easy, too, with ferries from Poole and Portsmouth via DFDS, and direct flights from regional UK airports.

Maison des Landes is a charitable trust, committed to providing memorable, affordable holidays for disabled guests. 2025 prices have been frozen at 2024 levels, and a 20% early booking discount is available for guests who book and pay before the end of July.

So, come and explore Jersey – the accessible Island with so much to offer!

For more information about Maison des Landes please call 01534 481683, visit our website www.maisondeslandes.co.uk or email reservations@maisondeslandes.co.uk

Household Gadgets and Tech to Make Life Easier

TumbleCare
Medpage MPPL-CM1S

If you, a relative, or friend struggles with everyday tasks, there is help available in the form of Assistive Technology. Assistive Technology is terminology used to describe useful gadgets that can aid independent living and Medpage Limited has been at the forefront of their introduction for over 40 years.

Our product portfolio focuses on personal safety and carer support in the home and community. Our devices to detect epileptic seizure movement have inspired a generation of product research and development since their introduction in 1996. We produce a range of fall detection and prevention products that are an integral part of NHS and Local Authority falls management strategies for seniors and falls risk patients. The same affordable technology is used widely by countless families to safeguard the ones they love.

AUDIO BOOST

Medpage Limited has collaborated with a leading UK manufacturer of crash mats to deliver a cost-effective tool for falls management strategies. The inclusion of the new TumbleCare full-length pressure mat sensor ensures that should a patient tumble out of bed, an alarm signal is generated to alert care staff to the incident. Beneficial for individuals who are at high risk of falling, such as older adults, patients recovering from surgery, or those with neurological conditions such as epilepsy.

Medpage, in collaboration with Atlinks, has developed a fall sensor bracelet that triggers automatic SOS emergency contact dialling using the Amplicomms BigTel 50 PLus. The Big Tel 50 is a big button landline telephone designed for simplistic use with extra loud earpiece, and ringer volume to benefit the hard of hearing. The waterproof fall sensor is of benefit to seniors, people with medical conditions, brain injury, diabetes, impaired balance and epilepsy.

Visit our website for comprehensive details www.easylinkuk.co.uk or telephone customer services on 01536 264 869

16:20
2021.3.12
Fri

FALL DETECTING PHONE WATCH WITH GPS LOCATION TRACKING

- **Detected falls notified to carer or parents via SMS Text with map link and or phone call**
- **Waterproof full featured watch with BP, HR, activity monitoring, SOS button, medication reminders**
- **Starter 1PMobile SIM included**
- **No contracts or monitoring fees**

£82.00 ex VAT
Model MMFA66

Med Page Quality Care Solutions Easylink UK

Your #1 Source for Affordable Assistive Tech
www.easylinkuk.co.uk T: 01536 264 869

medimotion

GET MOVING EVERYDAY...

Stay active with RECK MOTOmed®

Passive, motor assisted, active movement.
For loosening, strengthening & endurance

NEW

muvi

Train arms & legs together

loop

Innovative height adjustment

MOTOmed training can:

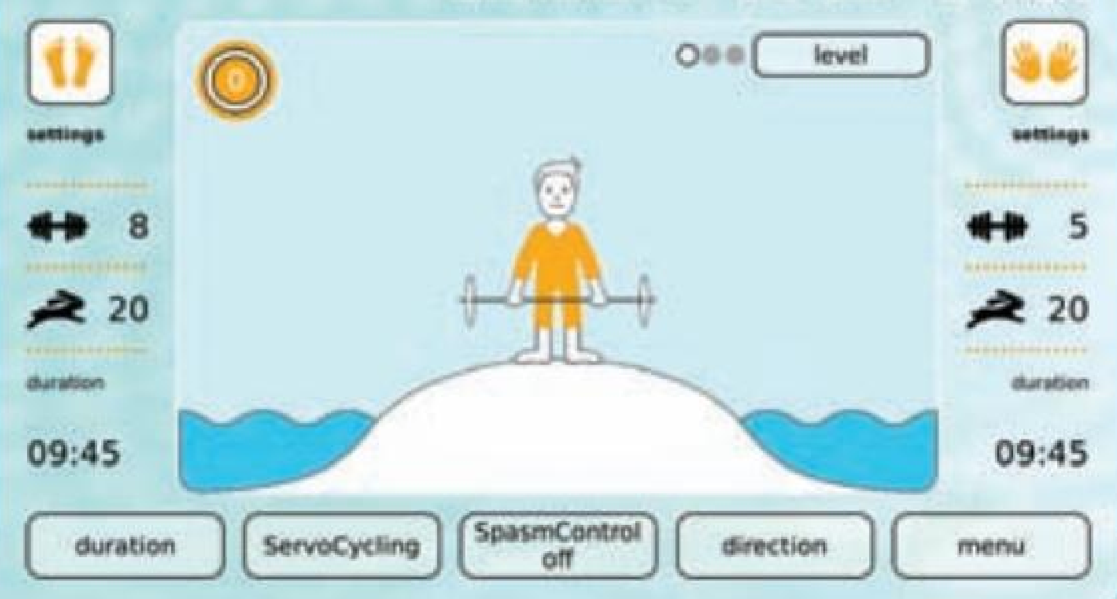
Reduce muscle stiffness and increase range of movement.

Improve circulation, walking ability, cardiovascular function.

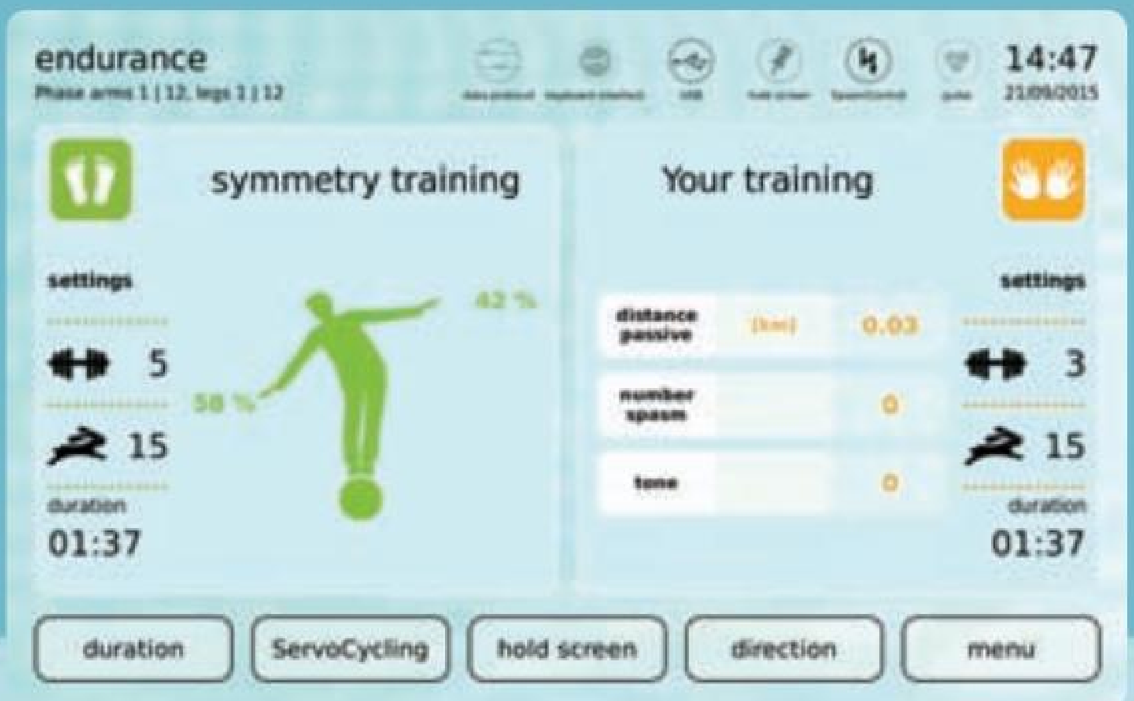
Used extensively in UK hospitals, therapy centres and private homes.

**Interest free hire/buyer plan available.
Call now for a FREE demonstration.**

01559 384097


billy balance
14:45
level
settings
8
20
duration
09:45
5
20
09:45
duration
ServoCycling
SpasmControl off
direction
menu

Interactive gaming


endurance
14:47
symmetry training
Your training
settings
5
15
duration
01:37
42 %
58 %
distance passive
number spasm
tone
3
15
01:37
duration
ServoCycling
hold screen
direction
menu

Co-ordination training

Children's

Bed Model

Parkinson's

tel: 01559 384097

sales@medimotion.co.uk www.medimotion.co.uk

RECK MOTOmed®
www.motomed.com

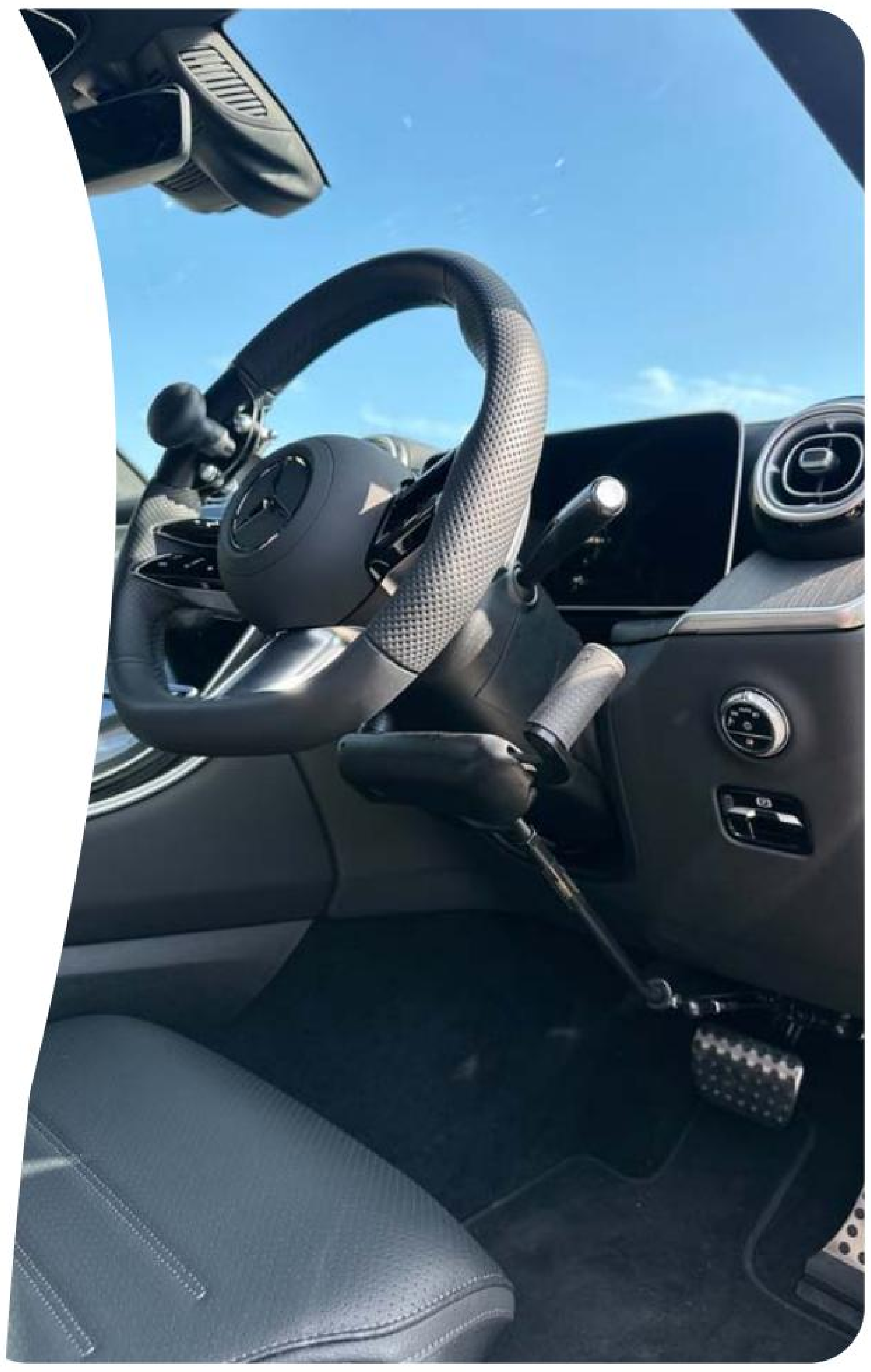
Keeping People Moving With Care

DES GOSLING
MOBILITY LTD

We make freedom on the road a reality with our top-notch vehicle adaptations. From expert advice to seamless installation, we are here to deliver the perfect solution.

Des Gosling Mobility Ltd is a family business focused on providing outstanding service through friendly, impartial advice from highly experienced staff. We pride ourselves on our excellent customer service and our approachable nature, which ensures your experience is straight forward and stress-free from start to finish.

With 30+ years of experience and over 1,500 five star reviews across Trustpilot and feefo, we're confident we can find the perfect mobility solution for you.



DES GOSLING

We offer...

- Impartial Expert Advice
- Exceptional Customer Care
- Latest Mobility Aid Innovations
- Quality Assurance With Every Job
- Solutions Tailored to You

DES GOSLING
MOBILITY LTD

We're Here to Help

Convenient adaptation installations done directly on your doorstep.

Give us a call today to arrange a product demonstration or fitting at either our showroom in Melbourne, Derbyshire or at your home address.

☎ 01332 863742

✉ sales@desgosling.co.uk

📍 Station Yard, Station Road, Melbourne, Derby, DE73 8HJ

Visit our NEW website today at
www.desgoslingmobilityltd.co.uk

SCAN ME

With Over 20,000 Customers Helped

Let us find the solution for you.

4.9 ★★★★★

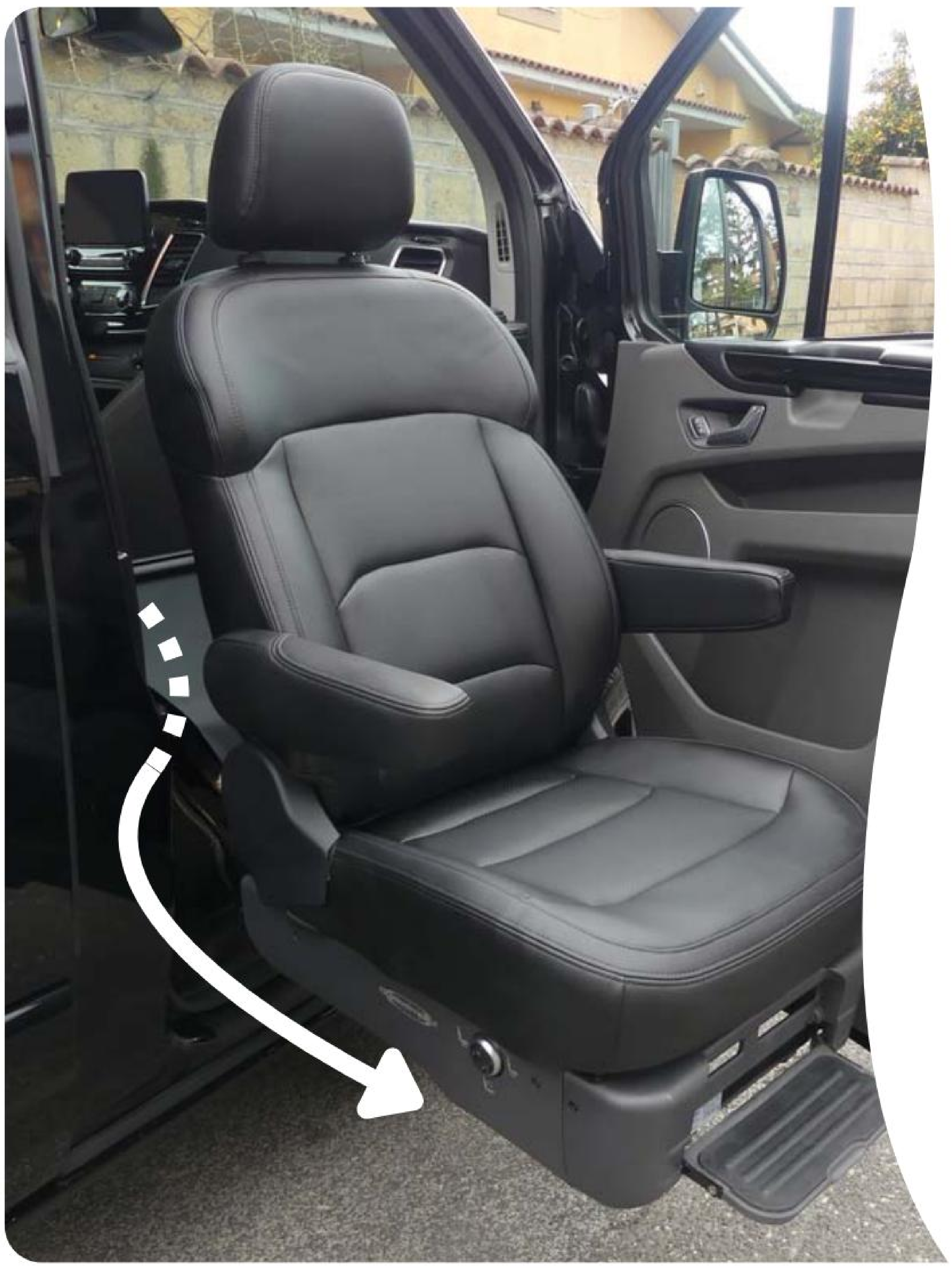
Gold Trusted Service Award 2024 feefo

What Can Our Access Aids Do For You?

We offer a full range of advanced vehicle adaptations to make every journey effortless. Explore our selection of Access Aids which have been carefully designed to make transferring in and out of your vehicle as simple as possible. So you can enjoy the road ahead with comfort and confidence.

Difficulty transferring out of your vehicle?

Our **Grab Handle** provides a secure and comfortable handhold allowing you to apply as much force as needed for your transfer. This strong and reliable design can be easily fitted to any vehicle, driver and passenger side.



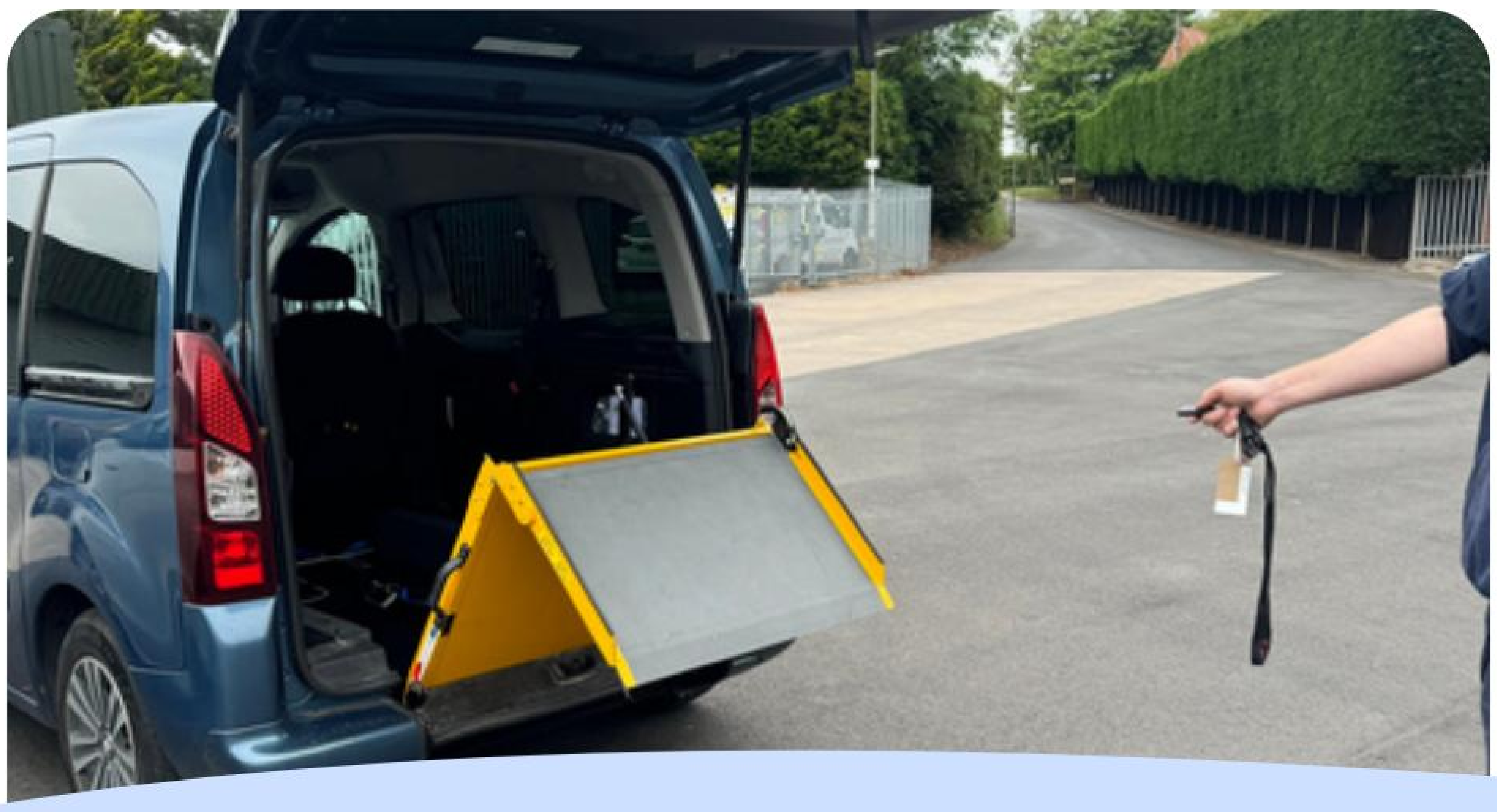
Finding the move from wheelchair to vehicle a challenge?

You May Need an S-Tran Swivel Seat!

Des Gosling Mobility Ltd is excited to offer the **NEW S-Tran Product Family** which includes a range of innovative and effective passenger transfer solutions to meet your specific needs.

This ergonomic swivel seat design is perfectly suited to almost all SUVs and other tall vehicles. The seat turns and lowers out of the vehicle to reduce the distance to your wheelchair, making the transfer as simple as possible. On certain models, the programmable backrest automatically reclines up to 170° before turning out of the vehicle. This feature is perfect for increasing comfort for tall users or for manoeuvring in vehicles with reduced headroom.

The S-Tran base is also installed using existing seat mounts so no permanent modifications need to be made to your vehicle to accommodate this product.



Want to automate your wheelchair ramp?

Our **Easy Ramp** is a retro-fitted unit designed to transform your manual ramp into an automatic one, easily operated using a wireless handset. It offers a fast and quiet self-locking design with pinch free operation.

Need more legroom?

Increase your legroom and distance to the steering wheel by up to 100mm with a pair of our **Extended Seat Runners**. This simple to fit, inexpensive product is an easy way to instantly increase comfort in your vehicle.

DES GOSLING MOBILITY LTD

To arrange a demonstration for any of our products, call us today on 01332 863742

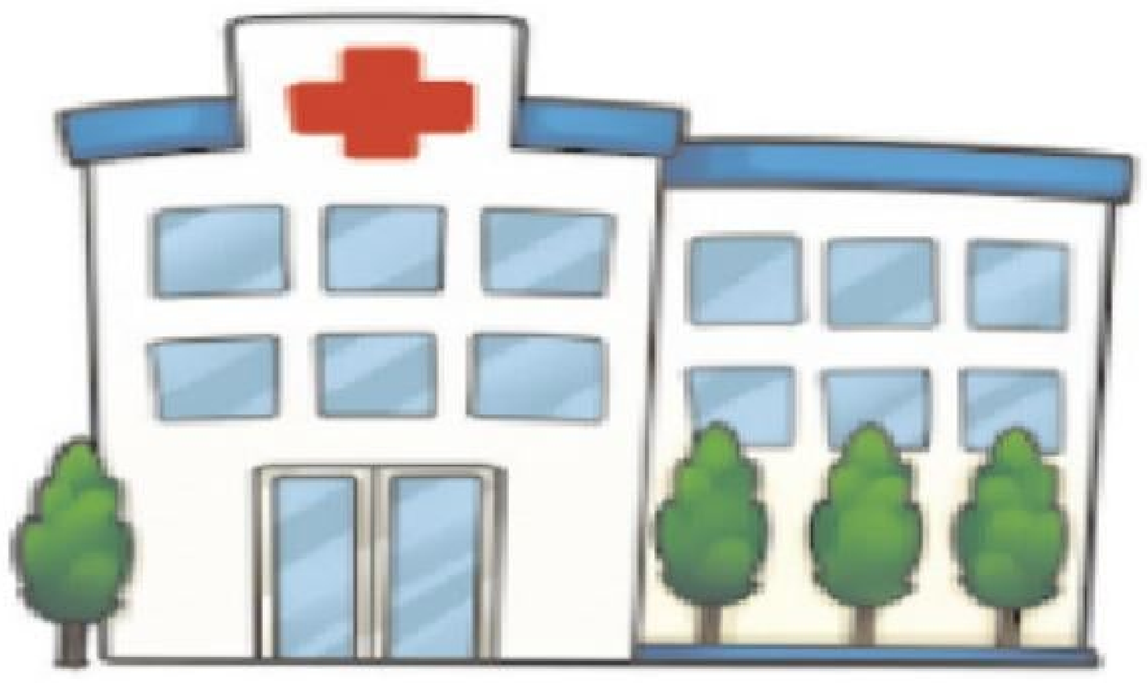
Eddie Peacock

What has happened to common sense?

Hello again,

Here is an interesting tale which, I can promise you, is true. I have changed some names and I have embellished a few of the incidents to keep you interested, but fundamentally it is accurate.

An elderly fellow, who we will call Harry, took a nasty tumble in his local high street. He had put his hands out on his way down to the pavement and consequently had a swollen, rather painful wrist. He was also sporting a colourful bruise over his left eye. Alice, his wife, suggested that they should go immediately to the hospital as it pays to be careful in such circumstances. (aren't wives just the best?)



Harry wasn't too keen but, being a sensible fellow, he acquiesced and off they went to the local A&E. Inevitably these days, there was a long wait but eventually his name was called. They both found themselves in a corridor, sat at the end of a line of other casualties. A passing doctor welcomed them to the "New NHS, where we work in the corridor."

A rather world-weary orderly came to Harry to take his personal details. This commenced, as expected, with his name, age, and address but the following questions took him by surprise. Here they are roughly in the order that Harry recalls them.

Nationality - Are you,
Asian or Asian British,
Black,
African,
Caribbean or Black British,
Middle Eastern, or of Mixed or multiple ethnicity
And finally, White
The next question was a humdinger –
Are you pregnant?

By this time Harry was beginning to feel vexed and asked the world-weary orderly if she was joking. The unfortunate lady replied that although this seemed silly, she had simply to follow the rules and ask the question. Harry, recovering his equilibrium, did ask for directions to the gynaecology department to verify his maternal condition, which managed to bring the Q&A session to a seemly and humorous close. It is important to stress that he was then treated expertly by a doctor, albeit in the corridor, and has since recovered from the incident. I am not sure whether he can still bowl his offspinners, but he is certainly back to normal.

It occurred to Harry that something fundamentally curious is going on here. What has happened to common sense? Everyone will acknowledge the importance of "attention to detail" but doggedly reciting needless questions is a waste of time and money. Is this just a tiny example of how much time and money is wasted elsewhere in the NHS? We are all aware of the pressures that our NHS is under, but ensuring that the maximum time spent on treatment is of the greatest importance.

Surely damaged wrists and bruises are similar whatever their ethnic origin. Despite the current vogue and the endless media time spent discussing "trans rights", chaps like Harry are never pregnant and every sensible person knows this. This amusing tale casts a light on a worrying situation.

We hear that the NHS is broken and that solutions are financial. There is a regular plea for more money, but is this the simple answer? Maintaining this vast organisation is a gigantic task. NHS England states that it is "one of the largest employers in the world"

Eddie Peacock has worked in the mobility industry for “rather a long time”. He enjoyed a challenging career having started by selling wheelchairs, scooters and stairlifts for Sunrise Medical, eventually working his way to the position of UK sales manager. After a period as a self-employed consultant he was invited to manage movingpeople.net, then Handicare Ltd, in the UK. In recent years he held the post of Marketing Manager for Mobility which also involved supporting and working with the BHTA.

He has now retired and is looking forward to finding the time to perform useful tasks in the industry, playing drums in a blues band, travelling and most important, being silly with his grandchildren.

and “the biggest employer in Europe.” There are 1.3 million employees. The scope of its activities is huge and is increasing quickly due to new technology and it is reasonable to think that money will provide salvation. The solutions are far more nuanced and complex.

Whilst it is a valid thought that the government can fix the problems of long waiting lists, recruitment and staff retention by putting in more money, the answers are far more complicated. So, what does the NHS costs us? Stand by for some eye watering numbers from the Kings Fund. At this stage, I needed to remind myself what a billion is. I have never owned a billion of anything, but it is necessary to digest this detail when looking at these statistics. One billion is a sum of money with 9 zeros after the one, or simply, £1,000,000,000. Hang on to that for a moment. According to the King`s Fund:

In 2022/23 it cost us £180 billion;

In 2023/24 it is projected to be £178 billion;

This year, 2024/25 it is forecast to be £192 billion.

It appears that our governments have certainly been offering more money. This inevitably has led to our present government to look closely at how it is being spent. Our current Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Wes Streeting, is on the case. Management of this money (our money) is crucial. Senior NHS managers are accountable for financial matters and also for ensuring that the staff under their responsibility are performing their roles effectively. Is that £192 billion being used to best effect? Bluntly, are they all producing value for our money?

TaxPayers’ Alliance

The Taxpayers Alliance recently revealed that there were 1,694 senior managers being paid over £100,000 per annum in the year 2023 – 2024.

279 were being paid between £200,000 and £300,000.

17 were paid over £300,000.

512 earn more than Prime Minister! (he gets around £166,000).

Surely salaries of this magnitude should be geared to performance. This is where it all becomes complicated. Measuring success is not easy, owing to the complex nature of our health system. The Taxpayers Alliance, reasonably, suggest that measuring waiting time lists is a sensible place to start, and this raises very interesting questions.

The CEO of Plymouth NHS Trust earned £382,500 whilst they ranked 95 out of 136 on the official measure for waiting times. At the same time down at the Queen Victoria NHS in London, they are the best performers on this list for waiting times, no-one earned over £100,000.

There may be complex mitigating circumstances in this comparison but the point being made is that ploughing in more and more money cannot be the solution.

I fear that successive governments of every hue have failed to look deeper and provide the necessary leadership and inspiration. Establishing discipline and maintaining morale is a key task for all managers in every organisation. Who is responsible for asking staff to ask Harry those daft questions? High quality leadership can help everyone in a team exercise judgement and subsequently realise and even exceed their potential.

Those who dedicate their lives to healthcare perform wonders daily. Theirs is a true vocation, not just a job. Every job is crucial to the overall success of the organisation, even the seemingly humble. From the cleaners, the porters, the receptionists right up to the nurses and consultants. Everyone should be dedicated to efficiency delivered with a smile and the desire to make the patient’s experience as endurable as possible. All this despite pressure and stress. This is no easy task, but it should be addressed and quickly.

Final thoughts. Wes Streeting has a giant size job on his hands and Alice reports that Harry is not pregnant.

To contact Eddie send an email to info@abilityneeds.co.uk or write to him at Ability Needs, 7 Montgomerie Terrace, Ayr, KA7 1JL

Driving Mobility

Driving Mobility centres

Helping you with driving, accessibility and independent living

- Advice for drivers of all ages affected by restricted mobility
- Driving and passenger assessments
- Wheelchair and scooter assessments
- Driving tuition
- Retirement from driving
- Vehicle adaptations
- Provisional drivers
- Mobility equipment loading

Find your local centre at:

drivingmobility.org.uk/find-a-centre

0800 559 3636

info@drivingmobility.org.uk
drivingmobility.org.uk

#mydrivingmobility

Supported in England by:

Department for Transport

Charity Registered in England and Wales No 298178. Company Limited by Guarantee No 2192584.
© Driving Mobility, The Old Carriage Works, Moresk Road, Truro. TR1 1DG 19.11.24. v1.

Adapting for an Electric Future

Electric vehicles are the future and that future includes you.

SMART
LIFTER
POWER PACK

Whether you're heading to work,
taking the kids out, or planning a weekend away,
we believe everyone should enjoy the freedom of car travel.

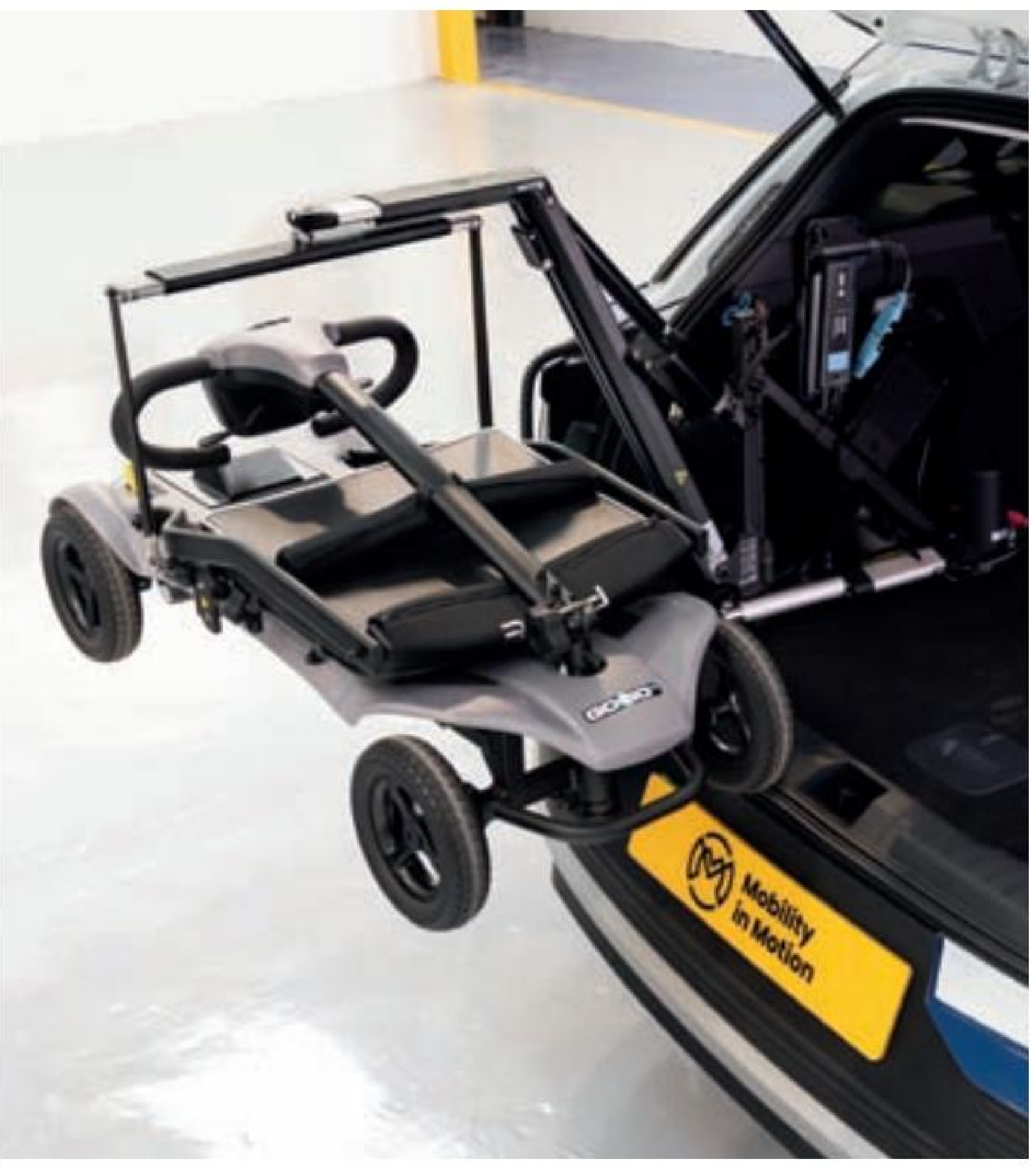
At Mobility in Motion, we're making sure that electric and hybrid cars work for everyone — including disabled drivers who need a little extra support to stay independent behind the wheel.

Yes — you can adapt an EV. Whether you need that extra bit of help to get seated, drive or even stow a mobility device, we have a solution for everyone's individual requirements.

From hoists to hand controls, the same solutions that work in petrol or diesel cars can now be fitted into electric models — just as easily and affordably. And with more disabled people choosing to drive than ever before — up 28% since 2021 — it's clear that access matters more than ever.

Take our latest innovation: a portable boot hoist battery pack. This clever device helps drivers lift and store a mobility device into their EVs, easily and independently.

It's one more way we're removing barriers and empowering real journeys.



Mobility in Motion

We're proud to be trusted by drivers across the UK. Rated Excellent on Trustpilot and winners of the 2025 Disability Smart Customer Experience Award, our team delivers expert advice, precision-fit adaptations, and genuine personal support.

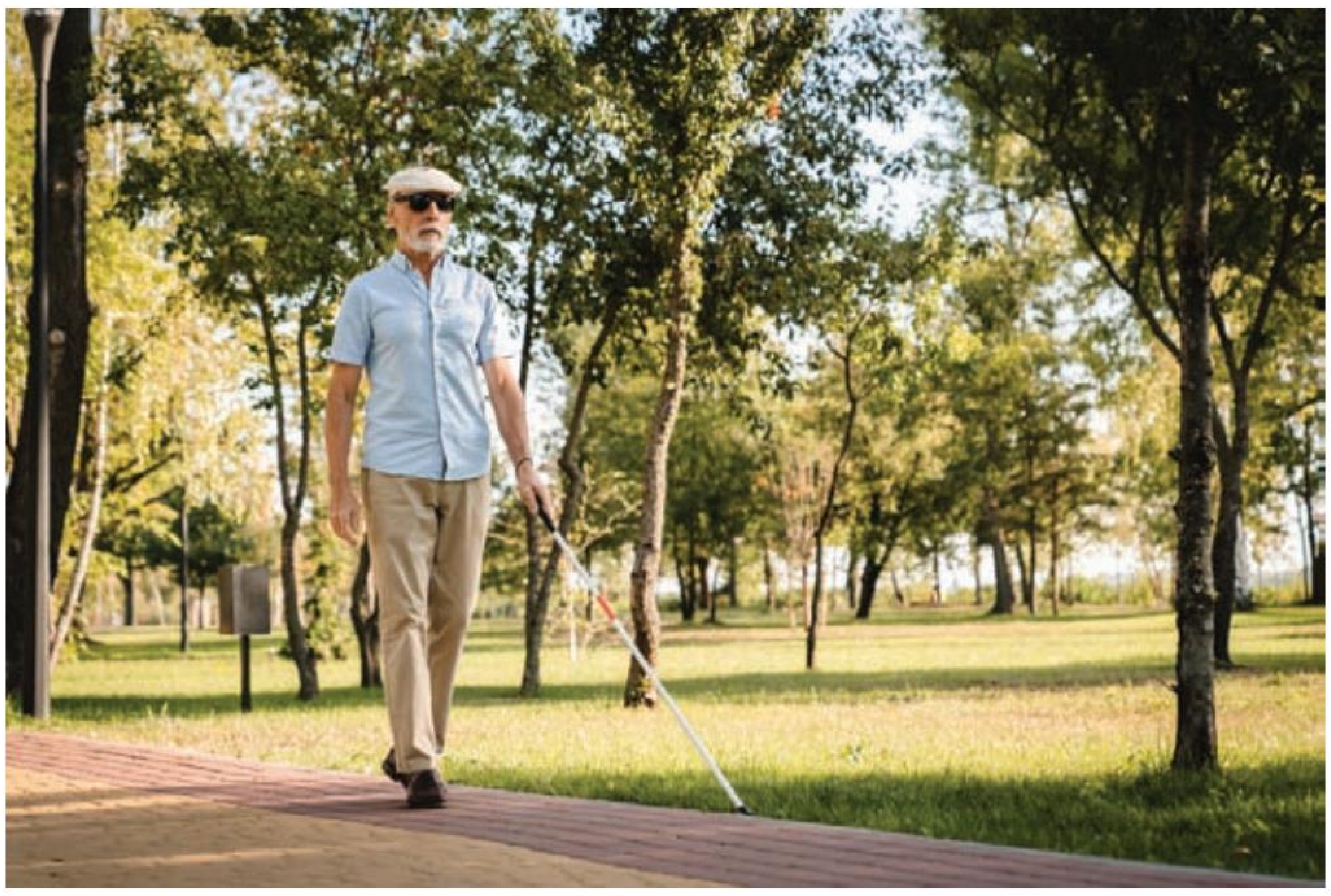
Whether you need one small change or a complete set of solutions, all our vehicle adaptations come with a 3-year warranty as standard.

Wherever life takes you — from the ends of the earth or just the shops — we're here to help you get there.

Call us on **0800 009 2905** or find us online at **www.MobilityinMotion.com** to start your journey.

Mobility® in Motion

Free Telephone Course Helps People Adapt to Life with Sight Loss



A free four-week telephone course for anyone experiencing sight loss, as well as family members and close friends, is helping to improve the lives of blind and partially sighted participants.

Organised by national sight loss charity RNIB Scotland, the Living Well with Sight Loss course includes information and advice on a range of topics, from understanding benefits and staying independent, to useful gadgets for everyday living, eye health, hobbies and interests, and other organisations and services that can offer support.

Participants are often referred to the course by their local Eye Care Liaison Officer (ECLO) - a service available in hospitals which offers emotional reassurance along with practical advice and support to help people make the adjustment to living with sight loss.

Marie (90) from Aberdeenshire says, "I looked forward to the course every week. There was about 10 of us on the call, and we spoke about all sort of things- transport and benefits for example, and I got to listen to others sharing their experiences of sight loss which was all very interesting."

Marie was also able to hear about appliances that could help her at home; talking microwaves, a liquid level indicator- a device on a cup or jug which vibrates to let you know when to stop pouring in liquid, 'bumpons' - small tactile stickers to attach to dials or buttons such as an oven temperature dial. "I can manage about the house really well, and the kitchen's the best place I can get about in now," she adds.

Another participant on the course, Alan (74) who lives in the Highlands, was also referred by his local ECLO. "Sight loss is all new to me. I lost a lot of my vision quite recently and I just didn't know how to go about daily life. It's not easy when you don't have the vision to read, so you're relying on other people, like the RNIB ECLO, to inform you about support available.

"The course helped my confidence, you learn things through talking with the others- just tips for basic life, like knowing when the cup is full when making a cup of tea. I also got some good advice about using bright colours about the house- the high contrast helps. And you hear from others too, which helps with the mental side. It's not always been easy and sometimes you can get very down, but people who understand are there to listen."

Alan tries to get outside as often as he can. But living rurally, this can be a challenge. "I can't drive now, and where I live, it's a 40-minute downhill walk to the bus stop on a dirt track. There's lots of potholes and things you can easily trip on. But speaking to others of the course, I got some good tips about how to use a cane and feel different textures on the ground.

"The course was just full of information- they gave tips on how to listen for the bus when you can't see it. I didn't know about bus pass concessions and getting help with train travel. It's all been a learning curve; I'm learning every day. I'd encourage anyone to go on the course- I know it's not easy, but you have to keep talking to people, and you should give it a chance."

'Living Well with Sight Loss' course co-ordinator Richard Craig says, "Through our phone sessions, you can receive practical advice, information and guidance on organisations, products and services that are available to help you. You'll also have the chance to learn from each other's personal experiences and share top tips."

If you, or a friend or family member has sight loss, you can find out more about the Living Well with Sight Loss course at www.rnib.org.uk/living-with-sight-loss/living-well-with-sight-loss-courses/ or enquire by email: lwwslenquiries@rnib.org.uk.

Get out there with Triride

TRIRIDE ARE A market leader in the production of Power Add-on devices. Whether you want full electrical assistance, or a Hybrid assisted handcycle we have you covered. Simply attach to your manual wheelchair in seconds and discover a new Freedom.

The Triride Special Compact HT with all road tyre is a great all-rounder providing full electronic assistance. Small, compact, packed with plenty of power to tackle those steeper inclines and handle some off-road use, but small enough and light enough to transport in the boot of your car.

Triride technology compliments the drive performance with Intelligent Cruise Control and Intelligent Braking System makes driving with family and friends a breeze. Paired with Triride's patented attachment method, fitting to most manual wheelchair is possible and customisable to each individual user requirements.

Wanting to go off the beaten track further? Combine any one of our Triride or Tribike models with the ground breaking MTW Trekking system. The Trekking Power system is an easily attachable rear axle system that provides you with three wheel drive power and ultimate traction to tackle almost any terrain, truly know no limits with Triride and the Trekking Power system. With it's multi use you know have 3 systems in one, indoor with joystick, Triride only for the city and MTW power for your trekking desires.

Find out more information on www.triride.uk

Triride
by Gianni Conte
FREEDOM
WWW.TRIRIDE.UK

Angus Long

Cheapest is not always best value for money

Never before has there been such a wide and varied range of equipment, therapies and services available to assist and benefit elderly and disabled people receiving a better quality of life. This is a cause for celebration and society should applaud its ability to prolong life and improve living conditions for the disabled. In addressing the long-term investment required to provide this, one must consider product psychology, purchasing strategies, product and supplier evaluations.

ASSESSMENT
CHECK
EVALUATE

Holidays, jewellery, televisions, iPods, microwave ovens, dishwashers and tumble dryers etc are all products classed as, “desirable-not-needed”. Emotion has a significant role in the decision-making process of desirable products. Most branded and luxury marques are attributed to desirable products. Some consumers will pay whatever it takes to have the right badge, no matter how good or unsuitable the product eventually transpires to be.

On the other hand, mobility products such as stairlifts, wheelchairs and bathlifts etc are classed as “needed-not-desired”, often referred to as “distress purchases” or “DPs”. A somewhat disingenuous term, that does little to dispel the embarrassment, reticence or stigma such products can attract. Generally, will DPs price and function fulfil the primary decision-making process, with emotion having little or no input.

It is perhaps no surprise then, that much procurement and marketing strategy for DPs is price focused. There is a growing trend and increasing pressure, in every sector, to provide mobility equipment and services for less, with “best value for money” or “most economically advantageous” becoming standard terminology. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with this philosophy, as any hard-up individual or taxpayer would concur. However, the words less, value or economic are all too often focused on initial purchase price rather than life-time cost.

The startling thing about DPs is that despite initially being undesirable, they quickly become indispensable to the people who have them.

When we consider that everyone has, at some point, endured the frustrations and inconveniences of a “lost mobile phone”, “a crashed PC” or a “car that failed to start” can cause. It’s bad enough not being able to use them, but frustrations can be further compounded if the backup service is lousy. Throw in a hefty repair bill and one can understand why people easily descend into states of incandescent rage! However, any frustration or wrath experienced at the loss of an everyday product is miniscule to the despair felt by those whose mobility equipment malfunctions.

It is vital for any individual, business or publicly funded authority seeking to purchase mobility products to do so on a "lifetime" value for money criteria. In addition to purchase prices, one should carefully consider reliability and customer service.

To assist in this, consider the following when evaluating a particular product or supplier:

Reliability:

Ask how reliable a product is. Ask for several references or contact a Local Authority service provider, who may be able to advise which products under their care have the best reliability record.

Warranties:

Enquire about any extended warranty available – don't just rely on an attractive headline. Check if the warranty is all inclusive or if there are hidden charges for call outs, labour, wear and tear parts etc.

Servicing:

Check what the service rates and frequency is – does the service charge cover any replacement parts?

Breakdown cover:

Check on the level of breakdown cover – is it 24/7 or only during office hours? Does the company operate a manned emergency call service or a simple answering-machine?

Customer service:

This covers every facet of the sales and after sales process and if done properly, good customer service will lead to customer loyalty. The mark of an excellent company is one whose customer service really starts the day a product is delivered or installed. Sadly, there are too many companies whose customer service disappears as soon as the cheques clear.

So, how does one ascertain if a prospective customer service will live up to expectation before taking the plunge? Well, there are a few indicators to help:

- When making initial enquiries, are staff friendly, informative and helpful, or too eager to send a salesman round to answer any questions?
- Does the company enquire about needs and circumstances first, or budgets?
- Does the company pro-actively keep clients fully informed at each stage of the sales process, or wait for frustrated clients to call them?
- Are questions answered promptly, accurately and efficiently or are they slow, vague and ignored?
- If sales representatives call, do they spend time ascertaining needs, circumstances, problems and solutions or concentrate on budgets, prices and deals of the day?
- Are promises kept, or habitually let down?
- Check if the company is a member of any trade associations.

Price:

Most people don't want to pay more than they need to for anything, but it is important that when comparing quotes, they are like-for-like. Make sure that quotes itemise in detail what is, and is not, covered in the price. Remember that the cheapest quote is not necessarily the best value for money.

View spectacular deals with a degree of scepticism and don't take anything for granted. Also, don't be too impressed by lavish promotional materials – after all, underneath the attractive and glitzy packaging, most Easter Eggs turn out to be disappointing, bland and rather poor value for money.

The old saying, "If it's too good to be true, it probably is!" is as fitting an adage for today as it's always been.

100 walk 100 - hiking the Jurassic Coast to raise money for SMA research

The wheelchair team – still smiling halfway up Durdle Door

Every now and then you have an experience that makes you feel truly humbled. Last weekend was one such time.

We were taking part in '100 walk 100', organised by Rally Round Rupert, a charity established by George and Charlie Mosey, after their son Rupert was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA).

SMA is a severe genetic neuromuscular disorder. Individuals with the condition experience progressive muscle weakness and wastage, causing mobility difficulties, and, at its most severe, problems with breathing and basic functional activities.

Rally Round Rupert was set up with a singular aim-to raise awareness and funds for further research into SMA.

So, Friday morning at 4am saw us waiting in the dark by the clock tower on Exmouth seafront. We were joining 100 other people to attempt a hike of 112 miles along the spectacular Jurassic Coast, from Exmouth to Bournemouth, over three days.

Alongside us was a team of phenomenal humans - all of whom had agreed to make an already tough challenge even tougher by assisting Stan, a part-time wheelchair user affected by SMA, to complete the whole route in a specialist all-terrain wheelchair.

The route was expected to be challenging - the first day alone boasting a large elevation including Golden Cap, the highest point on the South Coast. But I don't think anyone anticipated quite how brutal it was going to be. Three days of walking, starting at 4am and finishing around 8pm, over some of the most challenging terrain. Not all of us were able to complete the route, but every single person gave their best and more. Blisters on blisters, injuries aplenty - but people kept going, showing the most amazing spirit and camaraderie.

The wheelchair team piggybacked Stan up the highest points when the chair couldn't make it. They attached ropes to the chair to push and pull, helping him propel it along. The sight of them, after a 15 hour day, all working together with him to get from the beach, to the top of the cliff at Durdle Door is one I won't ever forget.

It was a phenomenal weekend and awe-inspiring to see so many incredible people giving everything they had to help raise funds for such vital work.

If you would like to support their efforts, then please visit www.gofundme.com/f/Rallyroundrupert-Jurassic-coast-challenge-2025

Zoomability Off-Road Disabled Wheelchair in the UK

Zoom Uphill Enhancing Mobility and Adventure for All

AddMobility are really excited to be the new distributor of Zoom Uphill in the UK, adding to two other fabulous outdoor accessible gyro-based products the Hoss and the AddSeat with a true 4-wheel drive unit.

Zoomability off-road disabled wheelchair Zoom Uphill brings amazing possibilities for individuals with disabilities to explore the great outdoors for pleasure and for work. This innovative wheelchair, designed with robust off-road capabilities, aims to provide enhanced freedom and independence to its users, allowing them to navigate challenging terrains with ease and confidence.

Pehr Johan Fager the CEO of Zoomability welcomed AddMobility to the global distribution of Zoom Uphill at the recent conference in the ski resort of Salen in Sweden to show the new model and its ability to reach places that, for many, are just a dream.

Therefore, it felt that the perfect place to officially launch AddMobility as the new UK distributor of Zoom Uphill, as well as showcase the Hoss and AddSeat, was the Land and Estates area of the Game fair at Ragley Hall in Warwickshire July 25th-27th. See www.thegamefair.org

The game fair for many is the highlight of the year to try many new sports and activities which need a mobility device to access them and adding the Zoom Uphill, says Ian Thompson Chief Engineer at AddMobility, will add to that accessibility.

To find out more about the Zoom Uphill visit www.addmobility.com

Sit, Rise & Recline

At the touch of a button

Make Life Easier

Why Choose Us?

- ✓ British Made Furniture
- ✓ FREE Home Choose Service
- ✓ Large Range to Choose From
- ✓ Sizes to Suit Everyone
- ✓ Fabric, Vinyl & Leather
- ✓ FREE Delivery
- ✓ Interest FREE Credit
- ✓ 6 Star Google Reviews
- ✓ Members of The BFA
- ✓ Customers Love Our Warm Friendly Service
- ✓ 60% of Our Customers Are Recommendations
- ✓ Your Old Furniture Taken Away for Charity
- ✓ **We Include a Price List with Your Brochure!**

We Tick All The Boxes!

YOUR GUIDE TO RISER RECLINER CHAIRS
THE STYLES
Questions & Answers
WHERE TO BUY
Riser Recliners

FREE
Buyers Guide, Brochure & Price list

We also support OT's and Carers to find the perfect Care Chair, Porter Chair or Bariatric Chair with our mobile service.

Google
FIVE STAR CUSTOMER RATING

BFA BRITISH FURNITURE ASSOCIATION

Sue Ryder

CHURCHILL Chairs

Call our Friendly Team on

0800 702 2101

or Visit: churchillchairs.com

Walk Towards Freedom

Impairment doesn’t mean you can’t play Walking Football

by Stuart Langworthy - Grassroots Director WFA

St. George’s Park

Impairment Walking Football is experiencing a huge growth. Thanks to the vision and drive of the Walking Football Association (WFA), there are now well over 30 sessions in England offering Walking Football and, more importantly, a support and social group, to hundreds of people living with a variety of health conditions.

It all started during lockdown when Stuart Langworthy (Grassroots Director WFA) met Paul Nicholls. Paul was in his mid 50s and had Parkinson’s and joined the “We Are Undefeatable Virtual Walking Team”. Paul sent me a video of himself in his back garden - shuffling badly with a stick, until he came across a football. It was like someone flicked a switch and he could run, dribble, turn. It was quite remarkable, but then his dog took the ball from him and he had Parkinson’s again. Paul’s comment which lit the touch-paper really was “If Walking Football can do this for me – it can do this for many others”.

Following lockdown, the two sought out John Roche at Northern Lights in Liverpool and Walking Football for Parkinson’s was born and has grown to support many other physical and mental health conditions. The three made it their mission to support as many sessions in England as possible to enable people to play walking football in a fun, friendly and safe environment.

2022 saw the first ‘Cure Parkinson’s Cup’ held at St Georges Park with 10 teams taking part. The game grew in 2023 seeing 18 teams taking part, with 20 teams in 2024, and 24 teams in 2025. An incredible 240 people with Parkinson’s playing Walking Football in one venue. Players saw this as a positive thing to be a part of, with a can-do attitude as part of the Parkinson’s family of walking football.

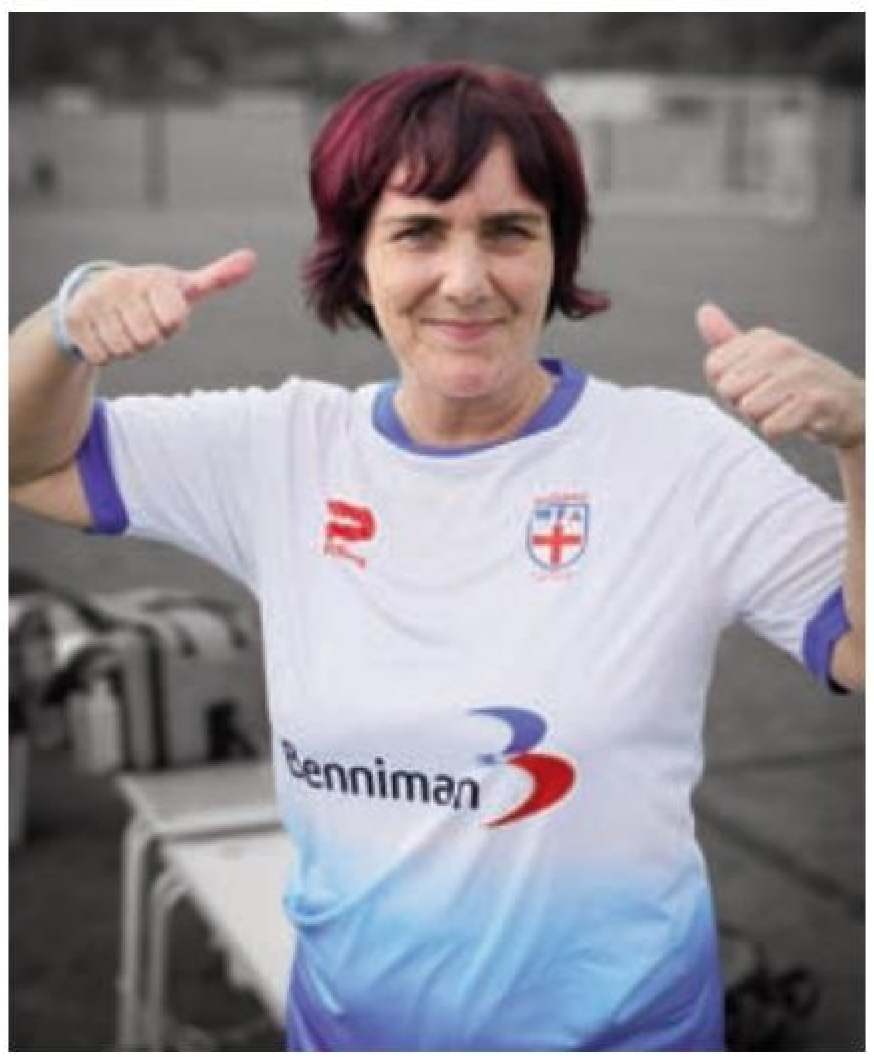
Following the success of the first ‘Cure Parkinson’s Cup’, WFA realised there was now enough players to fulfil the dream of a Parkinson’s England Walking Football Team.

The first International matches were played in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The team visited Singapore, an immense occasion, beating Singapore and Malaysia before lifting the winner’s cup. The team has since visited Guernsey, Malta, Basque Country and Florida. This team is packed full of inspirational people, all with their own story to tell of their fight with Parkinson’s. They are all role models and have a mission to spread the word and help to get more people to get up, get out, get active and play walking football.

2023 saw the WFA including Impairment clubs, players, coaches, referees and teams in their annual Grassroots Awards – with many inspiring stories being celebrated. It was clear the impairment game is here to stay and be celebrated.

2023 also marked the birth of another 2 incredible groups.

The Parkinson’s Pioneers, the brainchild of Annie



Annie Booth

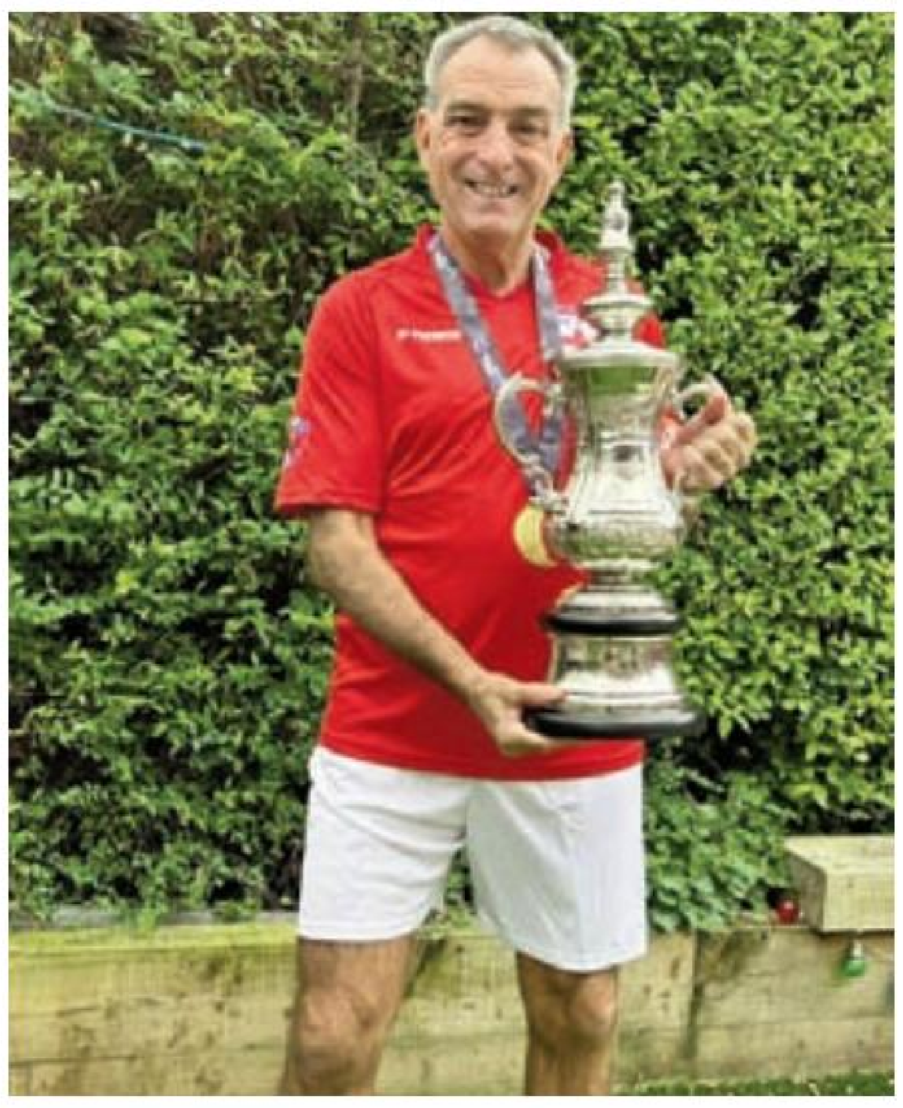
Booth with Parkinson's Walking Football for women. This group have entered friendly tournaments, the 'Cure Parkinson's Cup in 2024 and 2025, with their reputation and ability growing enormously. September 2025 will see trials for the England Women's Parkinson's team. The Pioneers continue to offer a place where women of all abilities can meet, support each other and have fun in a walking football environment.

The second remarkable group is the Kicking Cancer team. Tony Linforth-Hall (TLH) a member of the "We Are Undefeatable Virtual Walking Football Team" had a dream to set up a team of players who were either currently, or had been, living with cancer to play on his beloved Millwall pitch. In 2024 trials were held and an England Kicking Cancer team was selected at over and under 60's. With the number of females participating growing in 2025, trials will be held to start an England Kicking Cancer team for Women. Alongside the National Teams, TLH Kicking Cancer remains an organisation for all players who have either lived through or are living with cancer to be able to meet and support each other. Tony sadly passed last year but his legacy and vision lives on through this team.

The WFA have supported the England Transplant Team to develop Walking Football for their members.

Walking football really is the most inclusive of sports and the WFA are proud to have been a finalist for the past 4 years in the Sports Business Awards in the Inclusion and Diversity category, winning Bronze twice.

We have also been very honoured to be recognised by Parkinson's UK. WFA received £10,000 to encourage more sessions to support people with Parkinson's to play Walking Football. Well over 200 new players in over 15 new sessions were introduced to Walking Football as a direct result of these grants. To date The WFA has supported the introduction of over 70 new sessions for people living with long term health conditions. We were asked to partner the English Football League (EFL Trust), Parkinson's UK and We Are Undefeatable to run Train the Trainer courses for the Community arm of EFL Clubs.



Stuart Langworthy

Stuart Langworthy BEM (England Over 60s Walking Football Manager Grassroots Director WFA) said, "I feel so fortunate and honoured to have the roles I have within the WFA. I have achieved something most can only dream of, winning the first ever World Nations Cup as Over 60s Manager and we are planning to retain it this summer in Spain".

Parkinson's Pioneers

The game of walking football continues to grow, especially with interest in the Over 40's ladies teams following the Lionesses European success. Many had to drop out of football as young girls, but now see a way back to the Women's Game via walking football. Taster sessions are being held all over the UK and you can find these by visiting: www.thewfa.co.uk/axa-womens-walking-football-taster-sessions/

Walking Football is all about encouraging others, having fun, no egos, no agenda – just fun, fitness and friendship. It is a sport that is changing lives for the better.

For more information visit www.thewfa.co.uk

Making surfing accessible for everyone

by Cheryl Everitt

The town of Bude, on the North Cornwall coast, is home to a small charity with a massive heart and a fantastic community behind it. Adsurf was set up in 2022 by experienced adaptive surf coach and surf school owner Cyril Cox and his mum and colleague Gill. They wanted everyone to experience the joy and freedom that surfing and being in the water brings. Since starting, they have been successful in helping many people do exactly that.

Cyril and Gill are two special people. Absolutely passionate about what they do, they both invest huge efforts into the charity, continuously juggling it alongside multiple other commitments. But despite that, everything is personal and that is what makes them and what they do so remarkable.

The first thing you notice when you attend an Adsurf session is the total commitment to finding out what works for you as an individual. Plenty of time is given to ensuring that your needs are addressed and the perfect solution found, to help you achieve whatever it is that you are hoping to. Success is different for everyone – for some of their clients being in the water at all is a huge achievement while, for others, competitive surfing is the ultimate goal. The team at Adsurf support you with whatever you wish while ensuring that you have huge amounts of fun along the way.

Part of the charity's strength comes from their standing within the local community. The six trustees are all local people, some of whom have extensive personal and professional experience within the disability community. They have a large register of volunteers, again all local people who are keen to help and receive extensive training to do so. Inclusivity is evident in everything they do. In fact, some of their former clients have now chosen to become volunteers, assisting others to have the experience they have had. The charity also has the support of many local businesses, both for their frequent fundraising events and for supply of equipment.

On which subject, the team have an impressive array of equipment designed to help people with all abilities access the water. From special surfboards for tandem and prone riding, to a seated board for clients who are unable to self-support. They have all sorts of devices designed to make the experience even more comfortable. And it is not just support for physical disabilities.

They also have tools to help those with communication difficulties express themselves. Examples are widget symbol sheets to help people accurately convey their thoughts when in the water. Five beach wheelchairs are available, meaning getting to and from the water is easy. The charity may be small, but they ensure they have what they need and are proud of their ability to take anyone surfing.

Safety is paramount with all the team undergoing specialist training. Cyril is constantly looking at ways to develop their service, whether through how to deliver it or the addition of a new bit of kit. They are brilliant at what they do and it shows – hosting 220 individual sessions in 2024, they are steadily growing and, funding dependant, have plans to develop with lots of exciting projects. Going out on the road, for example, taking their service to other locations around the south west, thus enabling even more people to experience the excitement and fun of being in the water. Funding is key, as the whole team are committed to this being accessible for everyone and work hard to ensure price is not a barrier to anyone taking part. Some of their clients receive funding to take part but for the remainder there are options available, so that nobody is excluded because they can't afford it.

As one of the para coaching team for Surf England, Cyril is also in a unique position. He can signpost participants towards pathways into competitive surfing and in fact one of his clients, James, recently made it to the World Para Surfing Championships in California under his tuition. This was impressive, as he only started surfing less than a year before!

Cyril and Gill

But while this is an incredible achievement, it is the simpler things that really bring them joy. Seeing the sense of achievement reflected in the huge smiles of people coming out of the water is why they do this. Clients come back again and again and this is testament to the fun they have. Many have reported feeling calmer, happier, with behavioural changes noted in others.

I spoke to one of their recent clients. He described the sensation of surfing - 'It is fast, exhilarating, my adrenaline is going but in a good way, as I know I am in capable hands. It's lots to think about – I'm using my body, thinking about where I'm going but I love it. I feel happy and excited, it helps me to clear my head. It's refreshing and makes me feel as though I'm doing something purposeful'.

A family member of one client said: 'The benefits were instantly recognisable, she relaxed and her confidence improved'.

Another commented 'I felt proud and happy'.

And that is exactly what everyone at Adsurf is aiming for.

I urge you. Take a trip to Bude. Go and meet the team. Have a go at adaptive surfing. You will have so much fun and it will be one of the best things you do.

For more information or to donate go to www.adsurf.co.uk

Cheryl Everitt is mum of two active young people who both use wheelchairs and has been taxi driver and spectator of many different sporting activities over the years. In this column, she spotlights many of the fantastic organisations enabling people with various disabilities to participate in sport.

Pushing boundaries – new mobility products announced at national retailer event

Sunrise Medical has unveiled seven new products, designed to revolutionise mobility solutions at its exclusive Elite Dealer Launch Event.

Hosted at Warwickshire Walton Hall Hotel & Spa, the event featured the latest mobility solutions from Sunrise Medical's Magic Mobility, Empulse, Sterling and Quickie brands, with over 100 prescribers attending from 40 Elite retailers from across the UK.

The biggest announcement of the day was the launch of the flagship all-terrain Magic XT4, 12 years on from the Magic X8 launch – still one of the most popular all-terrain powered wheelchairs on the market. The new XT4 model features a revamped design with sleek lines and incorporates a new patented suspension system, designed to always keep all four wheels on the ground for extra stability. Its precise Servo steering system provides pinpoint steering accuracy, even in the roughest of terrains, making the new model the best in its class, while a 115ah battery provides an increased range of up to 38 kilometres. Thanks to these added features, the Magic XT4 can tackle even the most extreme environments, including sand, mud, gravel and snow.

Magic XT4

Two new lightweight power assists, the Empulse M90 and the Empulse R90, were unveiled on the day.

The Empulse M90 is the lightest wheel add-on on the market. With no extra component or wires, and a removable joystick, and just 5.1kilo per wheel lifting weight, the complete package is up to 40% lighter than similar products.

Empulse M90

Meanwhile, the new Empulse R90, a push assist, is the ideal option for users looking for a power boost that fits seamlessly with their manual wheelchair. Thanks to its removable battery and V-lock attachment system, it is easy to use, and the lightest power assist on the market, complete with a host of built-in safety features. An innovative, actuator-controlled drive wheel completely lifts the wheel off the ground when not in use, and its centre spin design provides minimal resistance when turning for best-in-class control and manoeuvrability.

Finally, the Sterling S800 by Scoozy, announced earlier this year and presented at Naidex in March 2025, was also showcased at the event. Its modern, bike-style design and compact dimensions, combined with its all-terrain power and large 18-inch wheels, makes it a premium option for both everyday and off-road mobility.

Sterling S800 by Scoozy

Following product presentations, retailers were given the opportunity to put both the Sterling S800 by Scoozy and Magic XT4 to the test on an off-road track at Warwick Adventure Sports, going up steep hills and over rough ground.

Lee Ratican, National Sales Manager at Sunrise Medical, said: "The Elite Dealer Launch is one of the biggest events of the year for us, and this one was truly special.

"We're always wanting to drive innovation and push the boundaries of what mobility products can do. It was fantastic to finally be able to unveil these new products, which have been in development for several years.

"Officially launching the Magic XT4 was a definite highlight of the day. It's been a few years since we last launched a new outdoor power chair in the UK, so the anticipation was palpable – and feedback from both retailers and test users has been fantastic so far. A lot of research has gone into the model, so it was great to see our guests put it to the test on an off-road track too."

For more information on the new Magic XT4, go to
www.sunrisemedical.com/power-wheelchairs/magic-mobility/4x4-all-terrain/xt4

For more information on power assists, including the Empulse M90 and R90, please visit
www.sunrisemedical.com/power-assist/empulse/add-on-devices

For more information on Sterling S800 by Scoozy, go to
www.sunrisemedical.co.uk/mobility-scooters/sterling/mobility-scooters/sterling-s800-by-scoozy

Be free.

ShopMobility UK

ShopMobility UK co-ordinates a network of local ShopMobility centres which hire mobility scooters, powerchairs and wheelchairs for everyone, of all ages, **to enjoy independence.**

Find your nearest centre at:

www.shopmobilityuk.org

Proud to be part of:
Driving Mobility

Supported in England by:
Department for Transport

Vilnius: The city break worth making time for

"Today we are doing a Love Tour"

Such were the words of our very enthusiastic guide when we met her outside our hotel on Pilies Street, the historic street at the heart of Vilnius, Lithuania's green capital.

Initially I was a little cynical, but the tour quickly unfolded, and became a fascinating resurrection of all the places significant in the story of Sigismund Augustus and Barbora Radvilaite. Every Lithuanian knows the story of the king and the widow who met and fell in love, despite many obstacles, before their love affair came to an abrupt halt in a tragic ending. It is a true story which took place some 500 years ago, 40 years before Shakespeare's tales of star-crossed lovers became the most recognisable story of forbidden love. The tour retraced their steps, highlighting many of the places of note in their love affair and, in doing so, placing the spotlight on many of the sights in this lovely city.

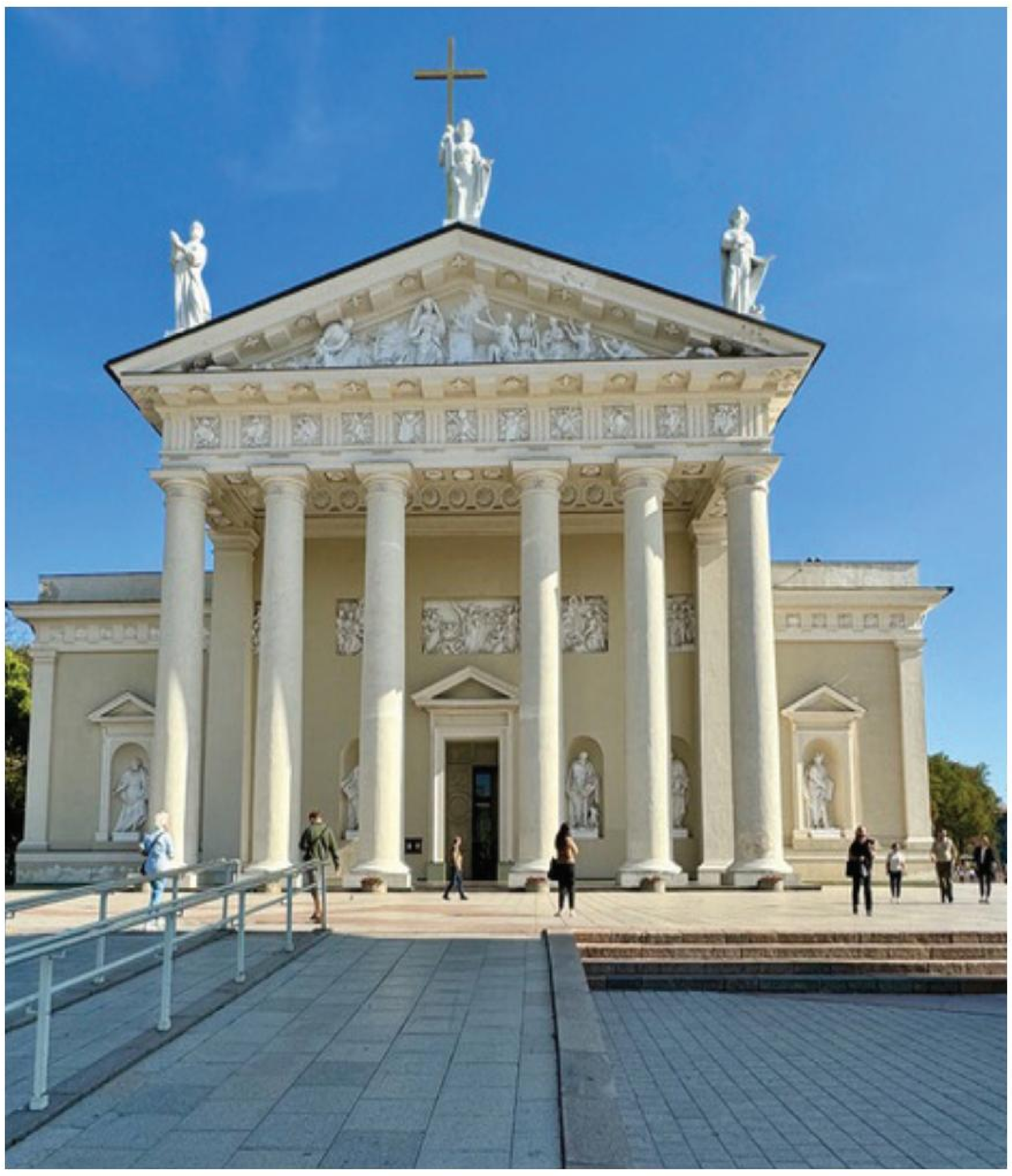
One example would be the Cathedral Basilica – right in the centre and fully accessible, this impressive building is the final resting place of Barbora, who had asked to be buried there, after she died in Poland. Round the corner, and in the shadow of Gendimanas Tower, the iconic remains of Vilnius' original castle, we visited the site of the tunnel where the two lovers met in secret, aided only by Barbora's brother, who was keen to profit from their union.

But Vilnius is not only about forbidden love stories.

It has so much to offer and while this small city may not have made it on to your radar yet, there are many reasons to visit.

Firstly, it is one of Europe's greenest capitals, having, in fact, just been awarded Europe's Green Capital 2025. There are parks, squares and nature reserves in abundance.

It is incredibly easy to get to – I flew from London



Accessibility at Vilnius Cathedral

Gendimanas Tower

Ready for film night in Lukiskes Prison

City airport. Right in the centre of London, a two and a half hour flight to Vilnius, followed by a hassle-free airport experience and only fifteen minutes into the city centre.

It has a fascinating history: with its UNESCO Old Town dating back to the thirteenth century, sitting alongside a more modern history, this is a city that has had its fair share of oppressors but has kept fighting back, to become the new and vibrant place it is now.

After visiting the Cathedral and the tower, we visited the Gates of Dawn in the Old Town walls. Here, a wall collapsed on four occupying Swedish soldiers, said to be cursed by the religious icon they had peppered with bullet holes. This same icon now holds court over the medieval street, viewable through a glass window.

A nod to the more recent past, Lukiskes prison was notorious for its brutality during the Soviet regime. Now however, it serves as testament to the strength of the city's inhabitants and their determination to look forward. Once a foreboding place (and indeed the setting for the prison scenes in Stranger Things), it is reinventing itself as an entertainment venue. Throughout the year, films are shown on big screens and bands meet to play on the stages erected in the former prison courtyard while friends talk and laugh over local craft beers and delicious food. Unfortunately, the prison buildings are not accessible for wheelchair users although the leisure areas are. Although there is talk of a virtual reality tour soon being available…

Talking of strength, it was to Vilnius, starting in Estonia and spreading through Latvia, that, on 23 August 1989, a chain of two million people held hands in a powerful but peaceful demonstration against Soviet occupation. The Baltic Way, as it became known, played a significant part in the road to independence and is now simply marked by a small stone in front of the Cathedral, easy to miss if you were unaware of its significance.

Everything can be seen from the top of the Vilnius TV tower– at 326m it is the tallest building in Lithuania and is, in fact, taller than the Eiffel Tower. It offers spectacular views over the city, however there are restrictions for people with some disabilities, who must travel with someone to help them in case of emergency. An alternative would be to take the accessible funicular railway to the top of Gendiminas Hill – while not as tall, it still affords an excellent view over the Vilnius skyline.

One of my favourite parts was Uzupis, the bohemian enclave on the opposite side of the river to the Old Town. Self-proclaimed as a republic on 1 April 1997, it now boasts its own constitution, president, parliament and flag. It only covers one square kilometre yet even has its own army and navy, albeit that numbers only eleven people and three or four boats! The district has a very relaxed feel – down by the river there are sculptures which change regularly, along with artists workshops. We ventured a little further and came across a small square with a pump, which, on Independence Day, is said to dispense free beer to everyone around. However, if you did have to pay you could do it with the local currency, as Uzupis has its own. Further along in the pub, I got my passport stamped with Uzupis' own stamp, while looking at the famous mermaid, said to entice everyone to stay.

On the opposite side of the river is the beautiful building of St Anne's Church and Bernadine Complex. This is considered a masterpiece of the flamboyant Gothic style and certainly made an impression!

continued on p48

Wandering around Uzipus

continued from p47

The famous mermaid of Uzipus

Also a short walk from Uzupis, was the intriguing Literatai street. A short, narrow street, its blue painted walls simply displayed over two hundred plaques dedicated to the writers who have lived and worked in the city over the years.

And therein lies more of Vilnius's appeal – many of its attractions cost nothing to see, making it a great and economical choice for a break away. Whether your preference is for art, history or green spaces they can all be found here.

Food of course is not free but there is a wide choice. Vilnius has a thriving gastronomy scene. There are many traditional dishes, such as cepelinai, stuffed potato dumplings. Or you may prefer to sample some of the newer offerings from award winning contemporary chefs, in one of the many Michelin starred restaurants.

And only seventeen miles away is the gorgeous town of Trakai – with its beautiful lake and fairytale castle, it is definitely worth a visit.

Vilnius is a compact city – easy to get around and mostly straightforward to navigate. In many places, smooth pavements have been laid alongside cobblestones or ramps accompany steps, making it easier for wheelchair users to get around. While there are still some buildings that are more tricky, due to age, the city is investing lots of money in improving access and it shows. The public transport network is also good, with accessible buses and taxis available.

This makes it simple to visit most things this intriguing city has to offer. Fascinating history and a slight quirkiness, all wrapped in up in a green and inviting accessible package – Vilnius's catchphrase is 'Unexpectedly amazing' and its spot on.

S. Anne's Church

Across the lake at Trakai

Cheryl Everitt is the founder of A Wheel and Away, an accessible travel consultancy designed to help people with disabilities plan exciting and independent adventures. She is also mum to two young people who are wheelchair users and, as a family, they share a love of exploring new destinations.

For more information about A Wheel and Away go to www.awheelandaway.com

Flying Disabled

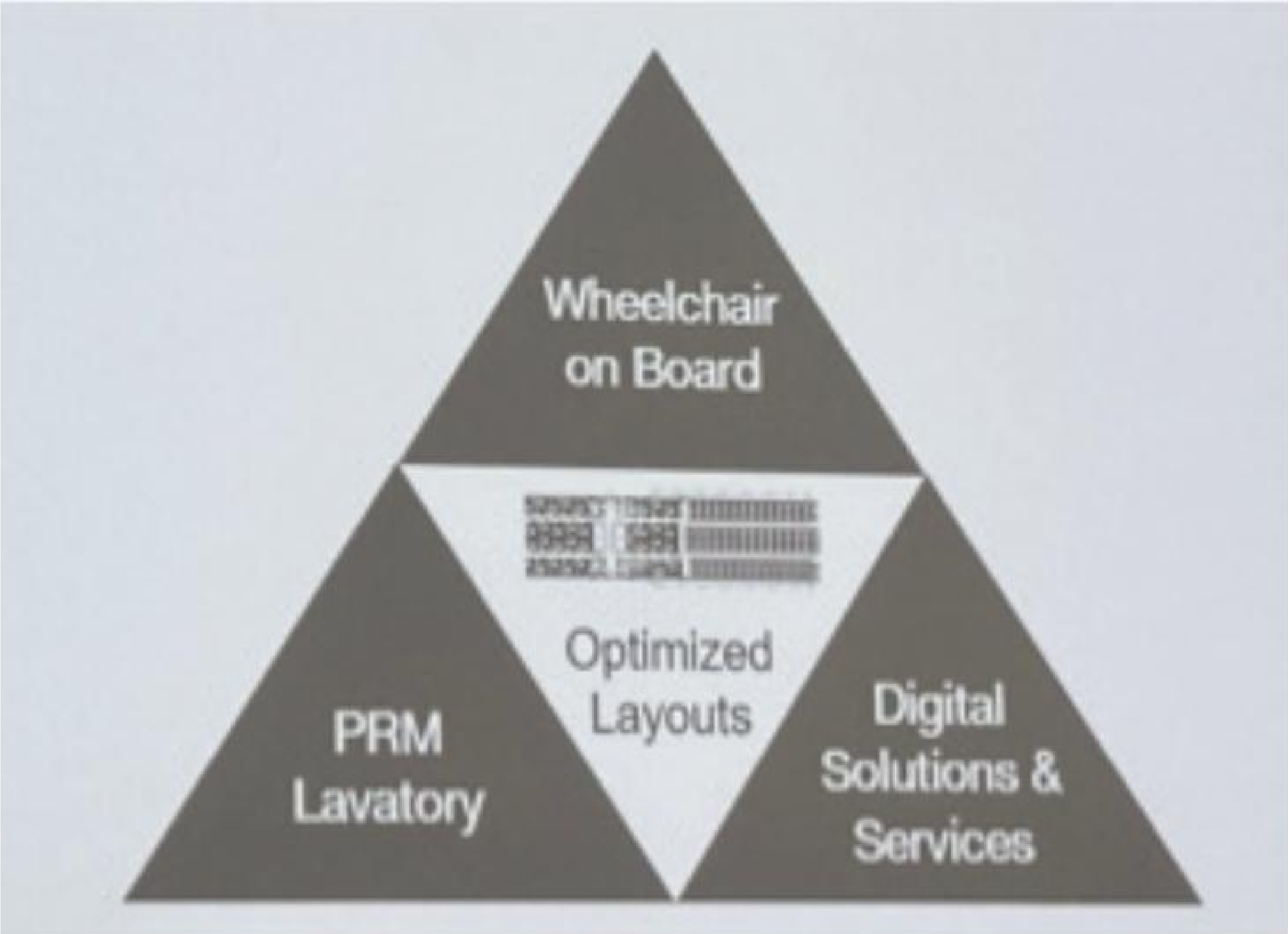
It's been a busy few months globally in accessible aviation

Christopher Wood MBE

ACCESS
On-board Wheelchair
AIRBUS

First up was Germany, to be precise the Hamburg Interiors Exhibition. Air4All announced its partnership with Airbus - for context Airbus are the biggest manufacturer of aircraft in the world. It is also one of the busiest stands at the exhibition, and there we were in full view of all the people attending and passing its door.

Then to the USA where Airbus hosted its cross-industry workshop in Washington DC. They have developed the 'Magic Triangle', a matrix that offers a direction as to where the industry needs to focus, with a view to honing and supporting the right solutions. This comes at a time when the Air4All consortium's partner, Delta Flight Products, is nearing supplemental type certification for its own onboard wheelchair securement system, as confirmed by DFP product innovation manager Tyler Anderson



Lavatories on aircraft are brutal for anyone flying and it is hard to see how this can be solved without increasing the footprint of the aircraft floor, which would mean a seat loss – the holy grail of any airline. Those solutions that are out there are trying to evolve in the same space; this still does not make it a Tardis.

There are, however, lots that can be done with in cabin digital solutions. For those who are blind or have low vision there are numerous apps that can help. Likewise for those who are deaf or are hard of hearing. The biggest challenge is neurodivergence. The fact that solutions are being sought offers some sort of comfort for the future.

I also attended the Red Cabin Summit in Atlanta and once again accessibility was high on the agenda. What makes this event unique is that the airlines themselves are always in attendance and they often take part in the discussions and workshops. It is clear that they want to be part of the innovation in an accessible cabin. We have come a long way and the future is looking good.

For further information visit: www.flyingdisabled.org.uk and www.air4all.net

Marsham Court Hotel in Bournemouth Triumphs at the prestigious Visit England Awards, Winning SILVER Award

Awards for Excellence 2025
ecclesiastical
Marsham Court Hotel
Dorset
SILVER
Awards for Excellence 2025
Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Award

Photo Credit: Visit England/Christopher Orange

The Marsham Court Hotel in Bournemouth is proud to announce that it was recently awarded a Silver award at the annual Visit England Awards. The hotel, well known for its exceptional service and facilities, took home the award for Accessible and Inclusive Tourism.

The Visit England Awards, a highly regarded event celebrating the best in tourism across the Country, was this year hosted at the Brighton Dome, welcoming over 250 guests from various sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry. The event highlighted the achievements of businesses and organisations across the country.

Regional Gold winners in 19 categories were put forward by their local tourism awards. Marsham Court Hotel's commitment to Accessibility and Inclusivity was acknowledged with the coveted gold award at the Dorset Tourism Awards earlier this year, which made it possible for the event organisers to put us forward for the nationals.

“We are over the moon to receive this award,” said Managing Director and Owner of the Marsham Court, Rosie Radwell. “Our team has worked tirelessly to create an inclusive, accessible space for all guests and staff. This award is a testament to their hard work and dedication, and we are thrilled to share this recognition with our community.”

The Accessible and Inclusive Tourism award celebrates the hotel's efforts to provide a welcoming and accommodating environment with access for all guests.

Robin Barker from the Dorset Tourism Awards said "My congratulations to the fabulous team at Marsham Court for leading the way for English hotels, showing that being accessible is not only the ethical way forward, but also makes sound commercial sense. Their vision and passion are outstanding."

In recent weeks the hotel was also awarded the prestigious Green Key certification for their environmental responsibility and sustainable operations.

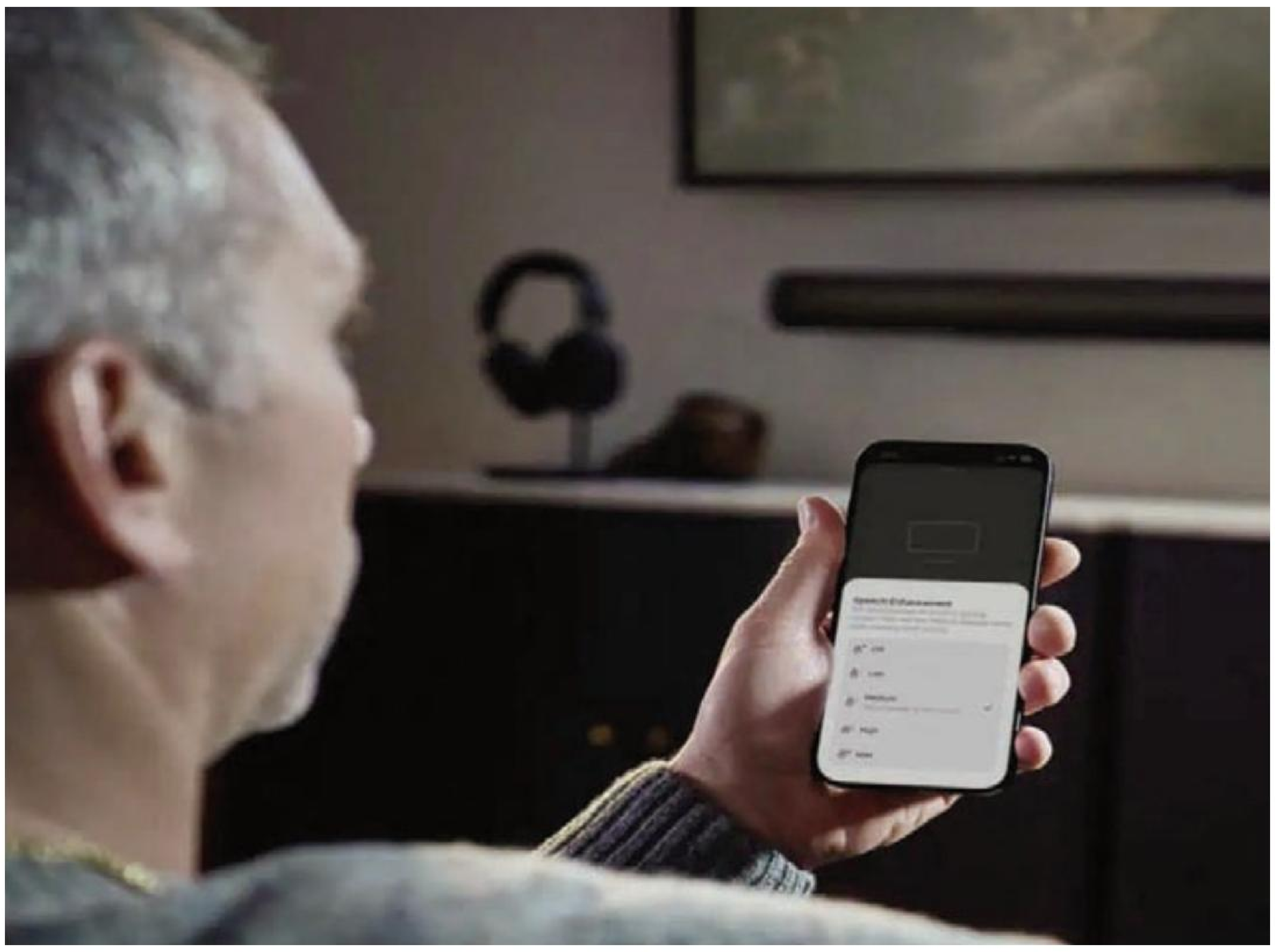
Located in the heart of Bournemouth, the Marsham Court Hotel offers an ideal setting for both leisure and business stays. With modern facilities, stunning views, and a dedicated team committed to exceptional service, the hotel is quickly becoming a go-to venue for businesses seeking a welcoming, accessible, and professional environment for their events.

As a winner of these esteemed awards, the Marsham Court Hotel is now positioned as a top choice for businesses looking to host memorable events with a focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and seamless service.

Marsham Court Hotel
FREE WIFI
LARGE CAR PARK
9 MEETING ROOMS
WEDDINGS & EVENTS
OPEN TO

For more information about the Marsham Court Hotel's business event offerings or to book an event, please visit www.marshamcourthotel.co.uk or contact our events team on 01202 446644.

Sonos' New AI-Powered Speech Enhancement: Designed with and for People with Hearing Loss



If you've ever struggled to catch what a character just said on TV — you're not alone. Dialogue in movies and shows has become difficult to hear for lots of reasons: rushed production, poor mixing, global accents, and even room acoustics. It's worse for those with hearing loss. Cranking up the volume doesn't always help, and subtitles can feel distracting when you're trying to enjoy all the visual elements of a cinematic production.

That's why we've introduced our updated Speech Enhancement feature — providing four levels of control that let you adjust dialogue clarity to match your needs, including one specifically made for those with hearing loss. It is available on our Arc Ultra soundbar via a free software update.

At Sonos, our goal has always been to help people enjoy great sound. We knew there was more we could do for those with hearing loss, so we entered a first-of-its-kind collaboration with RNID (Royal National Institute for Deaf People) to design a Speech Enhancement solution that truly addresses the unique challenges this community faces while watching TV.

Matt Benatan, Principal Research Scientist at Sonos, says: "It's not just practical, it's emotional. One of the most important aspects of TV and movie watching is the opportunity to bond over cultural and entertainment events that are watched in real time. If one viewer cannot fully hear the dialogue, their ability to enjoy and participate in the moment can be lost."

It was a hard truth, but one that deeply motivated our team. While TV soundbars have offered basic speech enhancement for years, they often lacked the effectiveness and sound quality needed to truly solve the problem. We embarked on a long journey to build a meaningful solution, and AI provided a breakthrough.

"By implementing machine learning into our speech extraction technology, we figured out how to separate dialogue from other sounds in the centre channel and clarify speech in real time," said Harry Jones, Sound Experience Engineer at Sonos.

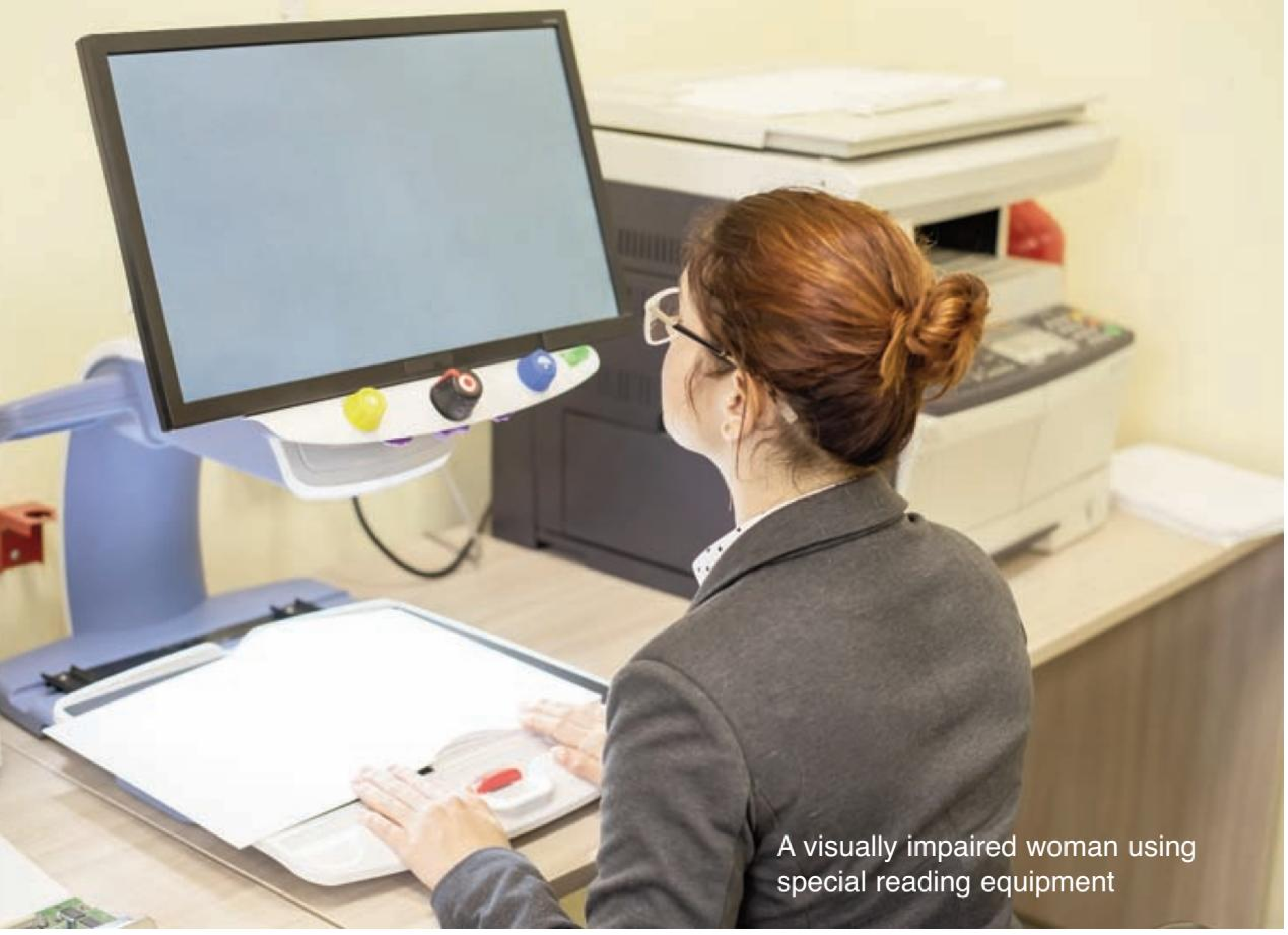
The result is a dynamic Speech Enhancement tool with four different levels to choose from - the highest of which is expressly designed for those with hearing loss - via the Sonos app home screen:

- **Low** - A subtle, artistic nudge that emphasises dialogue while maintaining the original experience and creator intent.
- **Medium** - A medium enhancement that provides better dialogue clarity and a tasteful balance of the surrounding mix elements.
- **High** - A higher setting that makes dialogue obviously prominent while reducing other mix elements.
- **Max** - The most pronounced setting where dialogue clarity takes full priority, designed for those with hearing loss. Unlike the more balanced approach of Low, Medium and High levels, Max level further controls the dynamic range of non-speech elements, placing dialogue firmly at the forefront of the experience.

In working with RNID, we collaborated with 37 participants of various ages and hearing abilities to gather their detailed everyday listening experiences and test the feature across a range of content types for nearly a year.

"We wanted to ensure that Speech Enhancement would work for all, even those who might not even realize they have hearing loss," said Lauren Ward, Lead RNID Researcher. "One in three adults in the UK experience hearing loss, and it is reported that just under one in four adults in the USA do too. This tool has the potential to impact a large number of people."

To learn more about Sonos Arc Ultra and our other home theatre products visit sonos.com.



A visually impaired woman using special reading equipment

Work with disabled people to design transformative digital assistive tools and tackle accessibility barriers, says Royal Society report

Tech companies, researchers and governments should do more to remove barriers and engage disabled people in the design of digital assistive tools and services, to maximise the transformative benefits they can bring, a Royal Society report has said.

The Disability Technology report, from the UK's national academy of sciences, identifies digital assistive technologies (DigAT), from screen readers to smartphone navigation apps, as critical tools for the 1.3bn disabled people worldwide to live fulfilled, independent lives.

Its findings have been developed by a committee of international researchers and technology experts, many of whom have lived experience of disability, and draws on focus groups, surveys and research with disabled people and leading technology figures.

The report emphasises disabled people should be included at the earliest stages of policy and technology design and that more should be done to make DigAT accessible through training, funding and infrastructure.

Dr Hamied Haroon, Research Fellow in Quantitative Biomedical MR Imaging, University of Manchester and a member of the Royal Society Diversity and Inclusion Committee's Disabled Scientists Subgroup, said: "We shouldn't be developing assistive technologies or policies without disabled people being front and centre of the process. How do you capture the day-to-day challenges faced by disabled people, or ensure you're offering solutions that actually work, unless you talk to disabled people?"

More than half of disabled DigAT users surveyed for the report said they could not live the way they do without such technology, however there are significant barriers to access.

Disabled people in the UK are almost twice as likely as non-disabled people to be unemployed, and the report highlights the average disabled household faces over £1,000 a month in extra costs.

This makes the high price of many assistive technologies needed for work or daily life prohibitive and the report calls for measures to address digital exclusion through training, funding and regulation.

It also recommends governments recognise smartphones as an assistive technology – in the same way as wheelchairs and hearing aids - and factor this into the provision of essential services like health, education, and internet access.

"These assistive technologies are fundamental to the workplace and our daily tasks – but they can be prohibitively expensive or unusable in some settings," said Dr Haroon. "We need to look at removing these barriers, whether that's costs, additional training, or infrastructure improvements – like addressing patchy mobile data services that can cut off disabled people in rural and deprived areas."

The report also proposes a rethink in the way disability data is recorded by statistics bodies. This should include more data on the daily challenges many people experience with their sight, mobility, and memory, rather than solely focusing on self-reported disability identity.

This would support policy makers, scientists and technology companies to ensure public services, research and digital tools are genuinely responsive to disabled people's needs. This will only become more important as data-driven and AI technologies continue to advance rapidly.

Sir Bernard Silverman FRS, Emeritus Professor of Statistics, University of Oxford and Chair of the report's Steering Committee, said: "This report explores the central part that digital technologies and their underpinning data can play in supporting disabled people to live full, productive lives. As a statistician, I would particularly stress that the data we record, and how we categorise it, affects everything and everyone.

"Data on the functional challenges experienced by disabled people would help researchers and providers to ensure that digital products and services, especially in the AI age, are genuinely responsive to their needs."

The Disability Technology report is available on the Royal Society website: www.royalsociety.org/news-resources/projects/disability-data-assistive-technology/

Sight Village Events: A Leading Exhibition for People with Visual Impairments and Low Vision

Sight Village is the UK's leading exhibition and an integral part of the blind and low-vision landscape, attracting thousands of visitors each year. This exhibition provides a unique and welcoming space where people with visual impairments or low vision can explore the latest technology, products, and support services. It offers an opportunity to engage with new innovations in a sensory-rich environment, designed to meet the needs of the low-vision community.

Held in Central England, in Birmingham, the main Sight Village event is a two-day event that has become one of the most prominent exhibitions for people with visual impairments and low vision. It offers a space where visitors can experience life-changing assistive technologies, discover helpful resources, and interact with leading companies and organisations. Similarly, the London event will also be a two-day event in 2025, providing another significant opportunity for people in the capital to access vital information and support.

In addition to these flagship events, Sight Village also hosts roadshow events in various regions, including Cardiff, Glasgow, Blackpool, and more in 2025. These roadshows ensure that people from across the UK have access to essential resources and information, regardless of their location.

At Sight Village, attendees can engage with a wide array of exhibitors, including charities, commercial companies, and voluntary organisations from the UK, Europe, and beyond. This diversity allows visitors to learn about the latest advancements in assistive technology, gain insights into vital support services, and connect with experts dedicated to improving the lives of people with visual impairments or low vision.

Sight Village is more than just an exhibition — it's a community-driven event that empowers individuals by providing knowledge, support, and networking opportunities. Whether you're seeking cutting-edge technologies, support, or simply looking to connect with like-minded individuals and organisations, Sight Village offers something for everyone. By bringing together a broad range of exhibitors and attendees, Sight Village continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people with visual impairments or low vision.

QUEEN ALEXANDRA ENTERPRISES BIRMINGHAM

Sight Village

"Sight Village is the UK's leading exhibition for the blind and low-vision community, featuring the latest technology, products, and services.
Hosting a range of exhibitions across the country each year, it delivers innovative solutions and support to communities in a sensory-rich environment."

A Legacy of Over 30 Years of Excellence and Community Engagement

qacsightvillage.org.uk

Tel: 0121 803 5313

Kidz to Adultz

North

Wednesday 3rd December '25
ACC Liverpool, King's Dock,
Port of Liverpool
9:30am - 4:00pm

- ✓ Free entry
- ✓ 100+ exhibitors
- ✓ Fun zone
- ✓ CPD seminars
- ✓ Accessible facilities

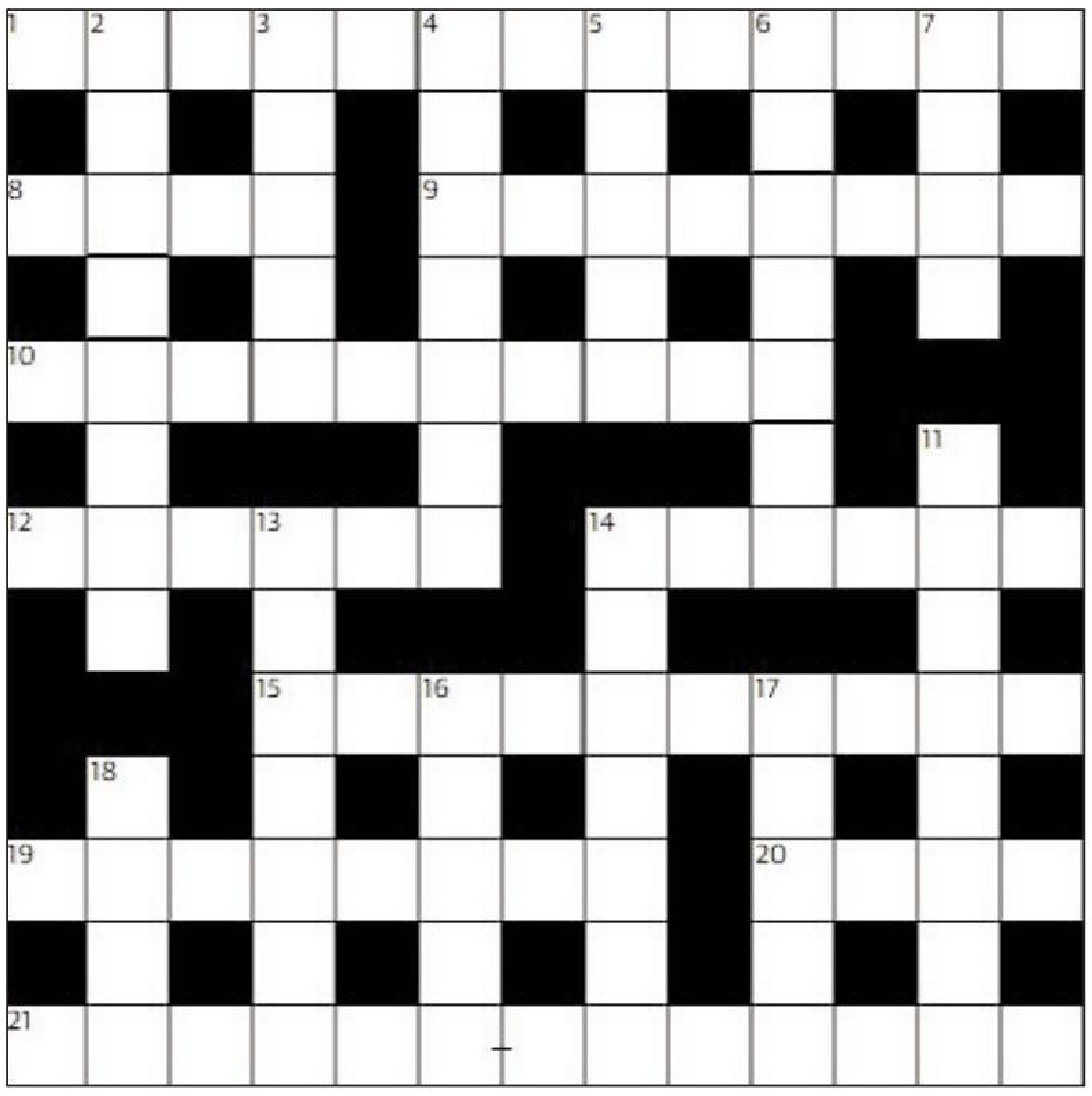
A bright and inclu
future for all child
Jiraffe
Sleeping

For children and young people with disabilities and additional needs, and the people who support them

kidzexhibitions.co.uk

Tea Break

QUICK CROSSWORD



CROSSWORD CLUES

ACROSS

1. Out of favour (2,3,8)
8. Europe's highest active volcano (4)
9. Sexual purity (8)
10. Stare superstitiously believed to cause harm (3,4,3)
12. Convulsions (6)
14. Biblical book – group escape from a hostile environment (6)
15. Court game (4,6)
19. Compelling (8)
20. Trickle – weakling (4)
21. Compassionate (6-7)

DOWN

2. No chance at all! (3,1,4)
3. Drag (5)
4. Starched white shirt front (7)
5. Solemn – burial place (5)
6. Very busy (2,3,2)
7. Drunks (4)
11. Runaway (8)
13. Wed (7)
14. Immoderate (7)
16. Composer of Der Freischütz, d. 1826 (5)
17. All-time low (5)
18. Burden (4)

REMEMBER WHEN…

All these events occurred in the same year but in which year was it?

- James Callaghan resigned as leader of the Labour Party
- Earthquakes devastated the Algerian city of El Asnam
- Actor Steve McQueen died
- Lech Walesa launched the Solidarity Union in Poland
- France performs a nuclear test at Muruora Island

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

> "…Don't be pushed by your problems; be led by your dreams…"
>
> Ralph Waldo Emerson

WORDPLAY: *GRAVID*

The word may seem familiar but do you know what it means?

A – Rock like
B – Pregnant
C – A liquid measurement

WHO AM I?

- An actor, I was born in Missouri in 1949.
- I have been married to the actress Melanie Griffiths twice.
- My film appearances have included Tin Cup and Born Yesterday, but I'm best known for playing "Sonny Crocket" in the 1980's TV series Miami Vice. Who am I?

QUIZ

1. What was the most lucrative export for many west coast South American countries in the 19th century?
2. Which famous three word reply is George Mallory credited with?
3. Who was the first woman to hit the charts with the song 'Bang Bang (My Baby Shot Me Down)'?
4. Which island country is the most westerly part of Africa?
5. Which epic movie, based on a real historical character, was the only film to have won the Oscar for Best Picture without a single female speaking role?
6. The registration plate for which famous vehicle reads "SCV 1"?
7. Nicknamed the "Eighth Wonder of the World", what was the name of the famous room or chamber in the Catherine Palace near Saint Petersburg which mysteriously disappeared during World War Two?
8. What were the names of the Titanic's two sister ships which ended with the letters 'ic'? 9. Liberty 1 was the name of the ill-fated space ship in which popular 1968 science fiction film?
10. Ukrainian, Sergey Bubka, is best-known for which sporting discipline?

abilityneeds
THE ESSENTIAL JOURNAL ON DISABILITY

Tea Break is sponsored by

IMPRESSION
MARKETING

Getting you noticed

Tel: 07968 421428

Answers can be found on page 56

TEA BREAK ANSWERS

Quick Crossword

ACROSS

1. In the dog house; 8. Etna; 9. Chastity; 10. The evil eye; 12. Spasms; 14. Exodus; 15. Lawn tennis; 19. Forcible; 20. Drip; 21. Tender-hearted

DOWN

2. Not a hope; 3. Heave; 4. Dickies; 5. Grave; 6. On the go; 7. Sots; 11. Fugitive; 13. Spliced; 14. Extreme; 16. Weber; 17. Nadir; 18. Yoke

Quiz

1. Guano, an ingredient of fertilizer and explosives; 2. "Because it's there." In reply to the question "Why do you want to climb Mount Everest?"; 3. Cher; 4. Cape Verde; 5. Lawrence of Arabia; 6. The 'Popemobile'; 7. The Amber Room or the Amber Chamber; 8. Britannic and Olympic; 9. Planet of the Apes; 10. Pole vault

Remember When… 1980

Word play B – Pregnant

Who Am I? Don Johnson

---

abilityneeds

THE ESSENTIAL JOURNAL ON DISABILITY

Reader Subscription Form

Name ....

Job Title ....

Address ....

.... Postcode .... Tel No ....

Signature .... Date ....

☐ Special Needs Group ☐ Nursing Home/Care Home ☐ Based at Home ☐ Social Work Department

☐ Local Authority ☐ NHS Trust ☐ Private Hospital ☐ Social Service Director

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTION

To obtain the next four issues of Ability Needs Magazine, please tick box and attach a cheque for £14 made payable to Ability Needs at:

7 Montgomerie Terrace,
Ayr, KA7 1JL

☐ Cheque attached ☐ Receipt

OVER 35 PRODUCTS ON THE MOTABILITY SCHEME

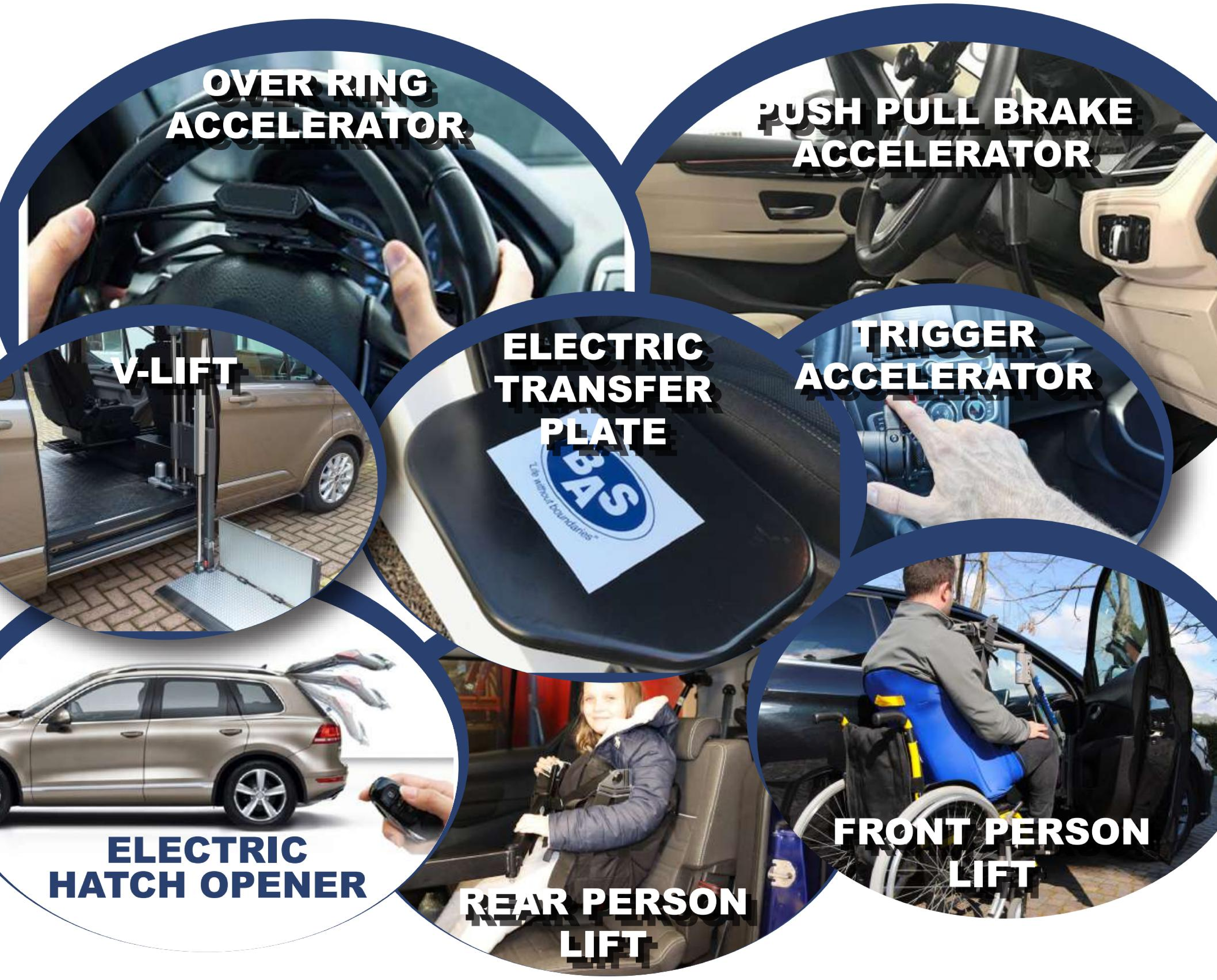
BAS

Life without boundaries

NATIONWIDE FITTING SERVICE

FULL RANGE OF VEHICLE ADAPTATIONS AVAILABLE

Hand Controls/Accelerators • Hatch Openers • Left Foot Accelerators • Person Hoists
Push/Pull Brake/Accelerators • Transfer Plates • Wheelchair Hoists/Lifts


OVER RING ACCELERATOR
PUSH PULL BRAKE ACCELERATOR
V-LIFT
ELECTRIC TRANSFER PLATE
BAS
Life without boundaries
TRIGGER ACCELERATOR
ELECTRIC HATCH OPENER
REAR PERSON LIFT
FRONT PERSON LIFT

0161 776 1594 / 01925 640730

office@basnw.co.uk www.basnw.co.uk

Motability Scheme

MAZDA MX-5
ON THE MOTABILITY SCHEME

ROADSTER AVAILABLE FROM £1,999 ADVANCE PAYMENT*

Designed to capture the pure exhilaration of driving, the Mazda MX-5's precision, power and performance produce an unforgettably joyful drive.

To discover how Mazda is driving inclusion forward scan the QR code or visit mazda.co.uk/motability/on-location

*Model shown: Mazda MX-5 Skyactiv-G Roadster 132ps Prime-Line. Recommended OTR from **£28,585** available on Motability from £1,999 advanced payment. Model shown features optional Aero Grey paint (£600). Premium paint colours are available at no additional cost to Motability Scheme customers. Recommended OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European roadside assistance. Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Motability Scheme vehicles are leased to customers by Motability Operations Limited (Registered Company No.1373876), City Gate House, 22 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HB. To qualify you must be in receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), the Enhanced Rate Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), the War Pensioners Mobility Supplement (WPMS) or the Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) and applications must be made with participating dealers between 01.07.25 and 30.09.25. Prices are correct at time of publish, are subject to availability and may change. T&C Apply.

Motability Scheme

MAZDA.CO.UK

mazda